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A STUDENT IN
SICILY

By the same Author

ANCESTORS IN SILHOUETTE
HISTORY OF HANDMADE
LACE

TOYS OF OTHER DAYS
HISTORY OF SILHOUETTES



SICILIAN PEASANT JEWELLERY

EARRING, BLACK AND WHITE ENAMEL ON GOLD, WITH PENDANT SEED PEARLS
 EARRING, SHIP WITH PEARL SAILS, THE HULL BLUE ENAMEL IN FLOWER FORMS
 GOLD CIRCLE, WITH ROPE EDGE, GARNET AND PEARL ORNAMENT

SHIP PENDANT, SHOWING SPANISH INFLUENCE, ENAMELLED SAILS
 PENDANT, SET WITH GARNETS GOLD BEAD ORNAMENTED WITH BLUE ENAMEL

A STUDENT IN SICILY

BY

MRS. NEVILL JACKSON

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR, SIXTY-FIVE IN
HALF-TONE, AND MAP

LONDON

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SICILY

A RONDEL

GATHER'D from East and West
Sicily's Prime.
Temples in gold are dres't,
Footprints of Time.

Greek Art in form sublime,
Gods manifest.
Gather'd from East and West
Sicily's Prime.

Saracens downward pres't,
Upward the Normans climb,
Island by Nature blest,
Fire Mount with cap of rime.
Gather'd from East and West
Sicily's Prime.

E. J.

PREFACE

SICILY is about one-third the size of Ireland, and forms Europe's bridge to Africa, to which it was once undoubtedly joined. Wherein lies the charm of this Three-Caped Island? Is it in Legend and Romance? Scylla and Charybdis still boil as when fatal to the ships of Ulysses, narcissi are blooming in the meadows where Pluto stole upon his victim, Etna thunders and flames as when Athene first threw the Island on Enceladus, Arethusa and Cyane flow as in the days when perhaps beings of a more potent race lived in Sicily.

In the story of Naxos, myths change into the certainty of Greek history, and here was fought the three-cornered duel for the lordship of the world by Greek, Roman, and Carthaginian.

The rule of Islam brought the beauty of Oriental art into the country, lasting long after Norman conquerors held supreme power, and other races, successively, left distinct trace of their influence in building, sculpture, and kindred arts, on modes of tillage, irrigation, and on the features of the people.

This is not a guide-book. I make no attempt to describe the seventy-eight churches and oratories, the fourteen gates and forty-four palaces of Palermo, nor the thirty temples in Sicily. It is rather the sketch-book of a student who notes the scenery, the buildings

with their great historical perspective, and the crafts wrought by almost every nation of the civilized world, who each in turn have conquered or colonized.

To those interested in excavation, the monuments of perfect beauty in natural golden stone remain, sometimes erect ; the ground around them is rich with treasure ; each day fresh examples of Greek beauty are recovered. Even as I write comes news that a mountain sanctuary of Demeter has been found, where we saw men working at Girgenti three months ago.

The pictorial sense is fed in Sicily not only by the superb temples of the epoch before the Christian era, but also by those of Arabo-Norman type, built while England was still under Saxon rule. In these the hermit mosaicists of Mount Athos emblazoned the walls with gold which still glows. Wall-girt mountain towns, where houses cling like snails to the rock, may be found untouched by modern improvement.

There are minor treasures, too, of old majolicas of Syracuse and Caltagirone, silver-plate of Trapani and Messina ; peasant jewellery, allied to Adriatic pearl-sewn ornament ; enamels and table cut stones, set in gold and silver ; church furniture and vestments ; relics showing Byzantine influence, carvings, and paintings when oil colouring was in the experimental stage, and those of the Spanish occupation ; furniture, embroidery, and lace of Palermo, and weavings from Catania's mulberry groves, whose patterns show Arab lettering.

Four of my chapters give indications to moderate collectors (for these Sicily is a happy hunting ground), and also to those who, having deep purses, wish to

acquire Greek statuary and terra-cottas, tomb jewellery, armour, and such quarry of the rich.

For special opportunities of study and for other courtesies I am indebted to Principessa Ganci, Principessa Lanza di Scalea; the Archbishop of Monreale for permission to view the treasures of the Cathedral; to Dr. Stella Churchill, L.C.C., for access to the unique collection of Sicilian jewellery formed by her husband, the late S. J. A. Churchill, M.V.O., Consul-General at Palermo and Naples, and also for the generous loan of drawings which have enabled me to illustrate special examples and to show how interesting will be the volume on this subject shortly to be published.

To Mr. A. Hamilton Smith, Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum, I am greatly indebted, not only for encouragement but also for his kindness and expenditure of time, already fully occupied, for the reading through the typescript of this volume for the press, to ensure accuracy in the subjects of which he has so long been complete master.

Mr. I. S. J. Whitaker, F.Z.S., has given me information concerning Phœnician antiquities found in the island of Motya; Mrs. I. S. J. Whitaker, historical details of modern Sicily at the time of the Unity.

My thanks are also due to Madame Tasca, Mrs. Joshua, Mrs. Robert, and Mr. Raymond Whitaker for access to their private collections and permission to reproduce specimens; to Professor Ettore Gabrici, Director of the National Museum, Palermo; to Professor Borzi, Director of the Botanical Gardens, Palermo; to Professor Miglia, Director of the Museum, Messina; to Professor Pipitone of the University of Palermo; to Mr. Barrett, Vice-Consul of Messina; to

Miss Hill and Signora Luccardelli of Taormina, and Signor F. Baller of Catania. All these have been most kind in assisting my studies. For errors of which I have been guilty in this volume, I claim their indulgence and that of my readers.

E. NEVILL JACKSON

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KENSINGTON.

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PART I

A STUDENT IN SICILY

CHAPTER I

PALERMO

THROUGH the Gate of Reggio we passed to the land of the Sun—Sicily, island of the gods and successively of Sicanians, Siculians, Phœnicians, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Normans, and half a dozen other conquerors and colonists who, seeing the most beautiful country of Europe, straightway coveted it.

Drenched in morning light, veiled in mist, the Island lay faint blue in the distance, her mountains sunlit, and on the shore outline of quays, sails of fishing-boats, and the sickle harbour of Zancle, now Messina, with evidence of recent tragedy.

In this land Nature herself is steeped in legend of god and goddess ; the very rivers and fountains were once nymphs and hunters. Flowers of Enna's fields served Pluto in rough wooing, and Ceres sought Proserpine with a torch lighted at Etna's fire.

Here are prehistoric buildings, the beauty of Greek art, and Byzantine, Spanish, and Italian craftsmanship : plains where blood of heroes has run like water, and a mountain whose violence is an unforgettable menace.

.

As we pass, we see poor Messina, sitting up and rubbing her bruises bravely ; the only whole building

of antiquity, visible from the train, is the old Castello on the hill. There are rows of new two-storied houses, made of depressing ferro-concrete, a terrible type of building material in this land of golden stone and marble, which alone stands earthquake shock.

With a sigh for Messina's seventeen-year-old troubles we pass between cactus and geranium hedges, and are soon amongst market gardens, tilled with meticulous care ; every inch is cultivated, trenched, shaped into mounds, holes, ditches, and every possible device to preserve moisture, and to obtain extra space for lettuce, endive, and such small crops.

Men, women, and children stoop over the soil with the long-handled, wide-bladed Sicilian hoe, or are pricking out tiny seedlings, raking the soil up, cherishing, coaxing the crops, until they are abundant beyond belief.

In sharp contrast to this exquisite care are the ruinous buildings, not broken by earthquake, for we have now left Messina behind, but the ordinary buildings of the countryside, often ambitious beyond all apparent necessity, but out of repair. Handsome iron gates, red with rust, and leading no whither ; great pillars with one fine lion or stone vase, the other fallen and lying broken on the ground. Odd little towers, immensely massive, of brick or stone, elaborately castellated, but uninhabited ; one of the footprints of an old occupation of the Island.

We are soon amongst the great hills that we saw blue in the distance on landing : now rushing beside them, so close that only six feet of violet and anemone-gemmed grass separate us from towering limestone rock ; sometimes with an intervening slope of rosemary hedge, pink geranium tangle, vineyard and lemon

grove : how strange to see the goats beneath the trees feeding on the wind-fallen fruit !

From the cottages the children wave as the train passes, chickens flutter, and a woman drawing water turns her head, draped in a blue kerchief. There is no dazzling whiteness in the building of these cottages as in Switzerland, for they are of the limestone on which they stand, and seem to melt into their background as we leave them ; if they are of plaster, they are painted a cheerful pink or blue.

Then comes Rometta. The town, far away from the station, is a relic of Saracenic conquest long ago.

The platform is crowded with what appears to be a large party of friends, who have come to greet more friends in the train, extracting them from their third-class carriages, handing out umbrellas and luggage, consisting largely of bottles and fennel bundles. The travellers are greeted with hearty hand-shakings, bucolic jokes (is not this the land of Theocritus?) ; everyone laughs, smokes, and seems vastly happy. Each man, woman, and child carries an umbrella and has on one or two shawls, though the day is bright.

They make no movement towards the exit, the entertainment of a waiting train is enough ; and twenty minutes later, when we steam out, the cheerful family party on the platform is still going on.

For many hours the sea, bluer than the sky, slips into our sight, shows us lovely rocks and stretches of sand, and then slips away as we thunder into a tunnel ; for the line winds along the rocky northern shore of the island.

On the Madonia mountains clouds are caught here and there, and the highest peaks are still snow-clad. Then we see Cefalu, crowning that great rock, which

of antiquity, visible from the train, is the old Castello on the hill. There are rows of new two-storied houses, made of depressing ferro-concrete, a terrible type of building material in this land of golden stone and marble, which alone stands earthquake shock.

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From the cottages the children wave as the train passes, chickens flutter, and a woman drawing water turns her head, draped in a blue kerchief. There is no dazzling whiteness in the building of these cottages as in Switzerland, for they are of the limestone on which they stand, and seem to melt into their background as we leave them ; if they are of plaster, they are painted a cheerful pink or blue.

Then comes Rometta. The town, far away from the station, is a relic of Saracenic conquest long ago.

The platform is crowded with what appears to be a large party of friends, who have come to greet more friends in the train, extracting them from their third-class carriages, handing out umbrellas and luggage, consisting largely of bottles and fennel bundles. The travellers are greeted with hearty hand-shakings, bucolic jokes (is not this the land of Theocritus?) ; everyone laughs, smokes, and seems vastly happy. Each man, woman, and child carries an umbrella and has on one or two shawls, though the day is bright.

They make no movement towards the exit, the entertainment of a waiting train is enough ; and twenty minutes later, when we steam out, the cheerful family party on the platform is still going on.

For many hours the sea, bluer than the sky, slips into our sight, shows us lovely rocks and stretches of sand, and then slips away as we thunder into a tunnel ; for the line winds along the rocky northern shore of the island.

On the Madonia mountains clouds are caught here and there, and the highest peaks are still snow-clad. Then we see Cefalu, crowning that great rock, which

towers up and out into the sea. Sailors still moor their fishing-boats to mighty iron rings in the prehistoric wall ; the house, which Ulysses may have seen, still clings like a martin's nest to the great cliff, and the Cathedral bell, which rang before Norman William came to Hastings, was ringing as we passed.

The ultimate stage of a long journey is a tiresome business, and state-owned lines increase fatigue by unpunctuality, but Palermo is reached eventually, and with a rattle over uneven pavement, in a tassel-decorated conveyance, we see Sicily's largest town at last.

Noise, intense light from sea and sky, and again *Noise*—these are first impressions.

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Monte Pellegrino dominates Palermo and lends beauty and dignity to this most vital and interesting city. Orientalism grafted on the Sicilian stem has but intensified the fierce, kindly, merry, clamorous character of the Palermitan, in whose blood there are so many strains from the races who, owning the Island for a time, have in turn fought in her streets, left their mark in stone and wood, in gold and brass, mode of tillage, and on the features of the people.

Pellegrino looks down on it all ; she has seen Hamilcar encamped on her sides, which then were wooded, and twenty-one centuries later she witnessed Palermo guarded by 20,000 regular troops, useless in the presence of Garibaldi, the Liberator, and his tiny army of patriots.

The mountain, once the home of fabulous Cyclopean giants, stands erect, sheer from the valley of the Golden Shell, and is reflected in the waters of the harbour.

There are rare days when winter gives her a snow

PALERMO



HARBOUR OF PALERMO. FISHING BOATS WITH LATEEN SAILS. MONTE PELLEGRINO
WITH MOUNTAIN ROAD IN THE DISTANCE

crown, standing out clear in the illimitable blue, and there are days when mystic vapour shrouds her with an immensity of cloud coverlet; and always the shrine of the Virgin Saint within her breast makes her the "Sacred Mount."

The effigy of Rosalia, chiselled in marble, robed in gold, lies sleeping in her mountain tomb. She was the daughter of King Sinibaldo and passed her childhood at court until, at sixteen years of age, she tired of the vanities of the world and became a hermit, living in rather a damp cave on Mount Pellegrino.

At her death, hastened by the damp, I feel sure, it was said she was buried by angelic attendants none knew where; the perfume of roses, however, betrayed her tomb, and Archbishop Doria, evidently a practical man, determined to try the effect of her bones as a remedy for the plague raging at Palermo in 1624.

A solemn procession was organized, and as the sacred remains of this saintly hermit woman passed through the desolate streets the plague was stayed.

S. Rosalia was declared the Patron Saint of the city, the bones were re-interred with great pomp in the Cathedral, and a solid silver shrine, weighing more than half a ton, was erected over them, which seems a poor and prosaic substitute for the perfume of roses.

The Festa of S. Rosalia is held from the 11th to the 15th July, and is one of the most typical and picturesque in Sicily: peasants ascend the mountain road to the church which has been built over the hermit's cave, and on the 3rd and 4th of September other pious journeyings are made to the shrine by hundreds of humble folk, who toil all night up the steep paths to await benediction at dawn.

S. Rosalia's car, on which the image of the Saint is

drawn through the streets, is an immense erection rivalling that of the Black Madonna of Castrogiovanni in size. The procession and religious ceremonies have not now the importance they once claimed.

Much merry-making, buying, and selling is done when the peasants come to the Saint's festa. Palermo also has an Easter Fair, which is held near the great opera-house, which is the largest in the world, but only by a yard. Sicily has a good deal of musical association. Wagner was at Palermo for a long time, and lived at the Palazzo Ingham in those days, now the Hôtel des Palmes, where the Wagner room is shown to visitors. "Parsifal" was partly composed there, and partly in the beautiful garden of Count Tasca.

During the three days of the Easter Fair at Palermo country housewives make the most of their opportunity to buy pots, pans, and clothing stuffs, between the more frivolous amusements afforded by visits to the peep-shows, marionettes, waxworks, wild animals, and other attractions.

It is quite according to the old Greek tradition that there should be this strange medley of religion, trade, amusement, and athletics, as at the Olympic Games. Sicily still acts on inspiration from her Greek settlers at Naxos in these and other matters.

Surely Palermo is the *noisiest* city in the world. Trams clang, motor hooters give continuous warning to straggling pedestrians, there are no silencers for motor bicycles or cars—happily these are few, owing to the badness of the roads. The cracking of whips sounds like pistol shots, warning the entire population walking in the road. The street cries begin at dawn and continue long after dark; the robust Sicilian shouts his wares, whether of cooked artichokes, cauliflowers, broccolitti,

or what not, in words barely articulate, but with vocal force which resembles the yodelling of Swiss mountaineers.

Then there are innumerable hurdy-gurdies with penetrating tinkle; besides the piano organs, which might be called "non-stop," as they are played even while being wheeled along the street—one man wheels while the other turns the handle, and if a pause is made one attendant or both break into full-lunged song.

Besides this there is vociferous talk at every street corner, round every shop door, which seems to be used as a place of reception for passing friends, so that the ingress of a possible customer becomes a secondary consideration. In Palermo, except in two fairly wide modern streets, life is mainly carried on in the road—on the footpath if there is one, and if not, in the paved highway. The coppersmith hammers and shapes his saucepan lids or scaldini on the threshold, while the forge is just inside his big door; the blacksmith has his anvil almost on the pavement, and his clangour adds another note to the chorus. Groups of women and girls sit on stools at their embroidery frames, and sewing-machines stand half outside: grandmother knits on the doorstep. Soup greens are picked over, cabbages are prepared, the cobbler mends shoes, and chickens, ducks, and turkeys stroll and peck about in friendly proximity.

It is all quite cleanly, for the ever active palmetta broom is constantly in use, and this outside life is not only pleasant and sociable but hygienic, for most of the homes are dull, dark caves, with no windows or chimneys, just as they were at Pompeii, where 20 feet of soft ash came down like snow and preserved the modes of life of A.D. 79 for us to see to-day.

Above all, or rather as the leading motive in Palermo's industrial symphony, is the tinkle of carretta bells: their original use as scarer away of evil spirits seems to be forgotten. They are sewn in dozens on the harness of the mules who pull the lorries, holding great blocks of stone, or the mucina (barrels), fourteen of which are reckoned a cartload. Rows on rows of jangling bells adorn the carrettas and combine with the tassels of gaily coloured wool, brass nail-studded woodwork, pieces of looking-glass, and the gaudiest painting to make these characteristically Sicilian vehicles a delight to the eye.

Even the harness of the dwarf Sardinian donkeys is garnished with brass and red wool: these animals did much good service in transport work during the Great War, carrying wine rations to the soldiers in the trenches, a small barrel slung on each side being their load. Now they drag the miniature carts, sometimes loaded with onions, sometimes with the person of their fat owner, who looks like an overgrown child out for an airing in a goat-chaise. The tinkle of little bells is the undercurrent of sound all over Sicily.

The Via Maqueda, the principal street in Palermo, is narrow for a main road, and has only 4 feet wide side-walks; at all hours of the day it is a dense perspective of people, mostly men, laughing, talking, gesticulating, loitering, calling back to each other, when they have passed on, returning to shake one another fervently by the hand and have last words and jokes. Hands talk in a language of gesture understood by everyone: heads are nodded, their grey felt, green felt, bright brown felt hats and head-covering of abundant woolly hair bob about with vigorous animation.

The few women are shawled like Madonnas or have thick woollen scarves wound gracefully round their heads, the long fringe giving a Spanish touch well adjusted.

Old men and the carters from country districts also have wool scarves round their necks and heads, as well as shawls, folded square on their shoulders: if the day is cold they put on more shawls; apparently, they only feel cold round their necks.

Wishing to be directed to any street or building, it is well to select a roomy doorway or Piazza, for the Palermitans are very kind and determined that you shall understand, but, heavens! the noise they make about it, and friends and relations join the group by the half-dozen, and give advice and further explanation in a light-hearted and joyous manner.

In the Via Calderai behind the Martorana the iron and copper smiths gather; each has his forge, and workers on the premises make your jugs, pails, and jelly moulds: housewives bring their goods to be patched and it is done before your eyes. Shoemakers are in the Via Cintorinai; cutlers in the Via Fornieri; potters in the Via Cassare; small jewellers in the Argenteria, and curio shops—a modern growth—are everywhere.

Some of the cleverest antique dealers hire old Palazzi in order to display their goods to the best advantage, as they have long done in London, Paris, Rome, and Florence. Here fine cassoni with gesso ornament and painted panels, beautiful sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cabinets of ebony, ivory, and tortoise-shell, the painted Venetian commodes gay with flower panels, Sicilian lacquer encoignures with red marble, or top of verde antico, all show to the

best advantage ; and what if the prices be as high as the yellow marble entrance pillars, one has had the pleasure of walking up the palace staircase, and one pays for it on the bill.

As in London, Paris, Rome, and Florence, those who have knowledge do not need to go to a Palazzo to make interesting finds, and anything can be packed and brought away from the Island as long as it has first been inspected by the Museum authorities ; a small fee is charged for this, but the tradesman undertakes the matter. Palermo antique shops are a very happy hunting-ground for those who have taste and judgment. Beautiful pieces of furniture, rich brocade hangings, small pieces of French and Florentine tapestry, with verdure or figures, old lace, tortoise-shell frames or cabinets, and a good deal of Empire furniture, on account of the Bourbon occupation, is to be had at very moderate cost. In calculating the price of transport, which is paid on delivery of the goods in England or elsewhere, the tradesman naturally tempts his customer with a very optimistic estimate : it is safe to double or treble what he says.

Some things are sold in most unlikely places, as salt in tobacconists' shops—Trapani alone of Sicilian towns possesses the right of making salt free of duty ; fish at fruit and vegetable shops ; stamps can be bought almost anywhere. Every third shop is a barber's, called *salone*. These are the clubs of the middle class, where all the news of the town is exchanged (as at the fountains for the women) ; comfortable seats and newspapers are provided for the men who await their turn. The places are well furnished with huge sheets of looking-glass, marble floors and fittings, and always have large plate-glass windows, so that

people who are being shaved are in full view of the town, and can themselves see all that is going on in the street.

And amongst all the busy life, shut off in places where no one seems to penetrate, there are mighty old palaces hidden, maybe, amongst the gloomiest and closest of walls ; sometimes they are in perfect preservation, owned by an absentee prince, and are filled with priceless tapestries, statuary, embroideries, and lace of the best periods, pictures by Italian masters of the Renaissance, porcelain of Menecy, Sèvres, Chelsea, Worcester, and Capodimonte, Oriental carpets, early Chinese pottery and hard stones ; and by the courtesy of the owner one may visit these museums of art. Sometimes these rich palaces have been deserted by their owners through some whim or fashion, and they are ruinous, the rust on hand-wrought iron flaking off the great gates, the walls mouldering and blotted in damp corners, the great balconies looking a little unsafe and with the fluttering laundry work of the poor floating on bamboo sticks, the carved figures seeming feeble with age. These immense old palaces are often let as tenements to the poorest workers ; a whole family in each room and the bassi divided into tiny shops and corners just large enough to hold the owner, a broom, some onions, a bundle of radishes, and a basin full of unknown fluid mixture for sale.

In the huge courtyard a pink marble staircase with double flights leads to the home of two sempstresses and a cobbler ; such a palace may be found near the Via Butera.

Again in this fantastic city will be found a palace now devoted to middle class use. In the large doorway

leading to the courtyard there is a poor old shadowy soul, licensed by public opinion to beg, for as a rule the streets of Palermo have been cleared of beggars. Further in, a buxom dame has erected a little stall, where she sells great bunches of violets, freesias, wild cyclamen, arum lilies, and a few of the commoner garden flowers in season. A couple of loafers with the hooded frieze cape of the peasant chat and greet their friends ; a man lies asleep on a stone shelf, and a marble panel above his head, exquisitely carved, shows the huntress Diana. Within, opposite to the doorway, is a bank ; the office of a notary is above, on the first floor ; while as one ascends the marble stairway the brass name-plate of a wholesale linen merchant directs the customer to clean and roomy offices. Above, on the second floor, are two commodious flats, and above again the rooms are occupied possibly by servants or caretakers.

At the back, looking out of the banker's window, is a small bleak-looking yard with cracked pavement, where weeds grow : a beautifully fluted marble cistern, with fine cornice moulding, catches the drippings and is green with damp : the lion's head at the lip of the cistern is dry. The whole place looks as if it has been deserted for a century, possibly it has. Truly, Palermo is a city of contrasts.

Although it is such a closely built town with narrow streets and tall houses, where in some parts one could shake hands with an opposite neighbour, there seems to be a lack of room : for new apartments are continually thrust in anywhere, in any corner where it is possible to build out : in a nook or angle, in a crevice by a dead wall—always some sort of habitation is being added, and looks very much like brick and



ARABO-NORMAN CLOISTER OF S. GIOVANNI

mortar fungus rather than a room fastened on by men's hands. This process seems to have been going on throughout the centuries, for up steps and down steps, in dark corners and in quaint angles, are little irregular bits of houses, leaning against other people's walls, choking up this passage or that stairway, always crammed in, to make just one more outhouse, room, or cupboard: and goodness knows how they are approached from the inside.

The houses and flats of the well-to-do are most commodious: the villas of the rich are beautiful, surrounded by lovely gardens.

As an example, there is not a lovelier house than the Villa Scalea: away from the town, surrounded by beautiful gardens, adorned with statues and a fine fountain, which was removed to its present position by the Prince Scalea of Garibaldi's time. The rooms are perfectly proportioned, each has its special feature in decoration and in the treasures it contains. One ascends to the reception rooms, as in all Sicilian houses, and Persian rugs are strewn on the tiled floors, except in the apartment where majolicas and choicest French, English, and Capodimonte porcelain are in keeping with the dated pictures of the Caltagirone tiled floor.

In another room, Venetian glass mirrors with be-wigged and powdered men and ladies engraved upon their surface suggest that beauty saw other than her own reflection. Venetian cabinets hold early examples of Murano manufacture, and azure, ruby, and gold-flecked crystal are stored in rows on the shelves.

Examples of Trapani work in bronze-gilt, set with coral, of tortoise-shell framing, and of embroideries sewn with coral are only a few of the treasures of Sicilian handicrafts in this house adorned by the true

collector whose fine examples are mentioned under special headings elsewhere.

In the Villa of Prince Tasca on the road to Monreale, the gardens and lemon groves are open to the public. Entering the state drawing-room as a guest one fancies one is still *en plein air*, for the painting of pillared pergola with hanging vines on one wall, and a vista of stately trees with bright fresh colouring on another, lends a gaiety of effect which we should do well to emulate in our less sunny climate, the drawing-room at the old house at Ranelagh Club House being one of the few rooms recently decorated in this style. The date 1760 is on the tiled floor pictures, framed in arabesque, at the Villa Tasca, and one can hardly imagine a more delightful environment for the courting of a King and Queen than had Frederick and Caroline at this lovely villa.

At Villa Sofia, about six miles out of Palermo, English taste combines with Italian to produce a charming home, the joys of lemon grove and ilex, palm trees and Arab fountain copied from La Zisa are there, and the rare taste of the owner in old embroideries, with fine specimens of the gold and silver smith's art, make the house of great interest to connoisseurs.

Such are three of the villas outside Palermo where delightful hospitality was shown to us. Other private collections are referred to in their respective places.

Still further out, but yet rising from the Golden Shell, as a pearl of great price, lies Monreale. There on the hilltop stands one of the most remarkable groups of buildings in the world. Clustered together, overlooking the valley, aloof from the business and throng of the world, their stately magnificence is obvious

to the least emotional, the essence of beauty seems to have been set on a pinnacle.

Long and weary must the road have been to the pilgrims of old, dusty and jolting it is in the present day. A four-mile climb of 1,200 feet, through the Porta Nuova, the great gate of the Castello, along the Corso Calatafimi, named after Garibaldi's victory, we pass the lodge of Count Tasca's garden and turn on our way to see the Cappuccini Monastery. There are 10,000 grinning skeletons, hung by the neck in vaulted niches. Glass-lidded coffins show men in lace frills and pumps, or cowed monks, women in pathetic caps and ballroom satins, children crowned with roses. Poor shrunken arms poke out of lace-trimmed sleeves, and on All Souls' Day devoted relations bring new shreds of finery to renew the old. It was considered a great privilege that a body should be so disposed, but the practice has now ceased.

After this depressing sight we get the tram which brings us to La Rocca, where we find a funicular carriage awaiting the passengers. By a clever contrivance of counterbalance we go up, hedged in with cactus and geranium, thus avoiding a two hours' drive, until we see beneath us the lemon groves and fields of fave, and beyond, Palermo's flat roofs and the turquoise sea with purple shadows.

Part of the town of Monreale, which has grown up round the Cathedral buildings, hangs upon the hillside ; from this foundation of living rock rises the Duomo, whose outside walls, like those of the sister churches of Palermo and Cefalu, are made beautiful with interlaced arches of black lava.

The plan is that of a Latin cross with three apses. The nave is divided from the aisles by magnificent

monolithic columns taken from older buildings, probably of pagan origin ; the capitals are of great beauty ; but the glory of the interior lies in the 80,000 square feet of golden mosaics, which yield to none in beauty and interest.

Entering by the north door of finely chiselled bronze by Bonanno da Pisa, who also made the doors of his own church at Pisa, in the twelfth century, one notes how lovely is the metal, green with age, in its setting of gold carved stone. Then we come from the sunlight into semi-darkness ; but what darkness ! out of it, colours glow in glorious shafts of light, and one thinks of those western cathedral builders, the stone-cutters, whose arms are " In azure, an ascension of the Son of God from a mountain, the whole in gold." Then details at Monreale emerge.

The lower part of the walls is covered with white marble panels, divided by 10-inch wide ribbons of mosaic, each one of a different pattern. The spaces above the columns and the whole of the upper wall are a pictured Bible. First, those scenes relating to the old dispensation, which prophesy the coming of the Messiah ; second, those illustrative of His life and miracles ; third, those which, in the times of the Apostles, set forth the triumph of the Christian Faith. They are arranged chronologically, culminating in the glorious half-length figure of Christ in the centre of the apse.

There is nothing more important in all Sicily than this great mosaic portrait picture of Christ, together with similar mosaic portraits at Cappella Reale, Palermo, and at Cefalu. They represent the same tradition, preserved from apostolic times, by the Calogeri, the mosaic-working hermits of Mount Athos.

The middle-aged ascetic face is that of a man of energy, the Great Founder of our Faith; there is tenderness, too, but there is no drooping meekness as in other later representations.

It was William the Good who founded the Benedictine Monastery close by in 1174; he lies in his Cathedral near to his predecessor, William the Bad, and it seems a pity that the porphyry tomb of William the Bad is much the nicer.

There are fine porphyry columns let in the angles of the side apses, and tombs of the sons of the bad William and a sarcophagus containing part of the remains of Louis IX of France, and there is a baroque Cappella del Crocifissa which is difficult to look at after the restrained beauty of the rest of the Cathedral, as it was built in 1690 in many coloured marbles and is a nightmare of over decoration. Two small wooden doors with beautifully carved panels should be studied, however.

Then we go away to the west end of the great building and drink in its beauty without looking at detail, and something of what it has meant to Sicilians through all these centuries comes to us as we see a group of kneeling peasants, sunburnt, frail with hard field work and poor food. One old man has the fine features of his Greek ancestors, looking as if carved out of old ivory, his skin a warm brown and sun-dried; his feet, sticking out behind him as he kneels on the marble floor, are bound with goat-hide thongs, reaching his knees; he has blue cotton breeches, a cloak of many shades of brown hangs from his massive shoulders bent in reverence. He clasps his staff high up with one hand as it might be the banner staff of his faith. He is exactly the model of the early Italian painters, when they show us the shepherds worshipping in the stable.

The treasures belonging to Monreale are wonderfully rich; of reliquaries and coffers, monstrances, solid silver sanctuary lamps, altar frontals, and jewel-studded church vessels there is a rich profusion. The earliest examples are, of course, the most interesting—of these, a Byzantine example, the enamelled angels' heads with folded wings, is the same in design as one sees in the apse at Cefalu and at Ravenna. A pyx of the twelfth century of silver is eight-sided, with fine stem and base; it is surmounted by a cross, studded with gems.

A superb reliquary of the sixteenth century has acanthus foliage as decoration—it stands twenty-eight inches in height; there are, besides, pastoral staves of silver and ivory, richly embroidered vestments, and other treasures too numerous to mention, all safely guarded in the strong-room sacristy.

Of the golden cloisters, with lion fountain and pillars, over two hundred, set in pairs, but with no two alike, it is difficult to speak. Such majesty of ordered line, such chaste beauty and simplicity, together with such racy and intricate details, make up a picture of golden perfection once seen never forgotten.

Some of the pillars are carved, some ornamented with gold, blue, or red mosaics, in vertical or spiral bands, others again are chevroned in relief, or sculptured with arabesques or scroll and foliage, in delicate patterns.

The capitals are very elaborately carved, especially at the angles, and contain the quaint allusions and jokes that the old craftsmen loved to embody in their work, and which endear them to us on account of human interest.

There is “no wearisome and unnatural uniformity. Is Nature ever uniform? Non-natural indeed is the

geometrical symmetry which was sought for in the pagan temples of Greece and Rome," says Sir James Yoxall, speaking of cathedral building. "Here in the Gothic, the infinite variety of Nature was to be imitated; though balance and proportion, as elements of beauty and seemliness, were not forgotten, they were made to serve, they were not permitted to rule."

In the south corner a small portico projects into the court at Monreale, enclosing a Moorish fountain with a simple marble basin and lion-decorated pillar, from the top of which the water gushes.

In guide-book language, "This Cloister remains one of the most elegant architectural monuments of the twelfth century."

Monreale has an archbishop of its own, and a delightful old palace behind the east end of the Cathedral, where from a lion's head of marble gushes water into a carved Roman sarcophagus. One may look down from its side on to the fruitful valley, where lemon groves and olives flourish, and only on steep banks and waste spaces are the picturesque cactus and aloe allowed to live.

On the heights, four miles away, is San Martino, one of the six monasteries founded by Gregory the Great. Here there are beautiful gardens and paintings by Pietro Novelli, the realist painter, who was a native of Monreale. He is described as "the Sicilian Guercino," and lived in the first half of the seventeenth century. At one time the cup from which Socrates drank his poison was kept at the Monastery.

It was to the Normans that Palermo owes that gem of Saracen building, the Cappella Palatina in the Royal Palace. It is only 70 feet long and 40 feet

wide, but it is astounding how much beauty can be concentrated in that small space. Old Arab inscriptions attest its origin; white marble, with bands of finest mosaics, decorates the lower part of the walls, as at Monreale, and also the walls of the room in the palace, of the same date, called King Roger's bedroom. Above, in each case, are probably the finest mosaics in existence; in the chapel, sacred emblems; in King Roger's room, stately long-tailed peacocks, on the golden ground. The pulpit in the chapel is gloriously carved; so also what is called the Easter candlestick; both are of the twelfth century. In the treasury are ivory and metal caskets, old charters, and other valuable possessions. The clock, which keeps excellent time, was made in 1142.

And what of Palermo's own Cathedral within the walls? One is proud to think it was built by an Englishman. He was Archbishop of Palermo in the twelfth century; Walter of the Mill was his name.

We marvel as we enter the Moorish doorway, and note the Saracenic roof detail. Then comes the glorious Arabo-Norman doorway; surely Walter of the Mill, like King Roger, must have seen some examples of Arab masons' work, and engaged the workmen because of its beauty, and that is just what he did, because he was ever so wise. He had his church made of beautiful golden stone, with delicate campaniles, and though, alas! a merchant prince of execrable taste marred the beauty by building an overpowering and incongruous dome seven centuries later, and ignorant and tasteless restoration of the eighteenth century has done its worst, with baroque stucco work, yet there is still enough beauty left to show how good was the work of Walter of the Mill—Englishman.

MONREALE



MOORISH FOUNTAIN IN COLONNADED ROOFLESS COURT. CLOISTERS AT MONREALE



DETAIL OF CAPITALS CARVED IN HIGH RELIEF:
OF THE 200, NO TWO ARE ALIKE



CARVED AND MOSAIC ORNAMENTED
COLUMNS IN GOLDEN STONE

The church of S. Giovanni of the Eremiti, with its five Oriental domes, also proclaims its Mosque origin. A fine piece of the old city wall is near and was doubtless one of the boundaries of the estate. The fourteenth-century cloister adjoining has a garden, enclosed with a line of double columns.

The name Eremiti has in its origin nothing to do with Hermits ; at one time it was called S. Mercurio, which shows that the old God Hermes had his name embedded in the Christian name which still remains. The Martorana, or S. Mary of the Admiral, because it was built by King Roger's Admiral, is of the same period as S. Giovanni, and has three red domes. In 1435 a dreadful piece of reconstruction took place ; a lady named Martorana endowed a Convent, and a fine porch was added to the church, which necessitated breaking through half the beautiful mosaics. A choir was added, and a fine lapis lazuli high altar now stands, a beautiful thing in itself but no compensation for twelfth-century mosaics. The still older S. Cataldo is included in the Martorana enclosure, but, alas ! stripped of its mosaics.

The Piazza Vigliena, which is also called the Quattro Canti, is the Piccadilly Circus of Palermo, where all the business men, loiterers, the shoppers, and street hawkers pass or congregate : it is a small octagonal piazza at the intersection of the Via Maqueda and the Corso, once the Via Toledo, and is so small and full of loungers that, driving or walking, one must proceed slowly. The decoration of the houses is of the seventeenth century and of no artistic merit, showing a medley of kings, saints, and seasons ; there is a fountain on each corner : each one is fully engaged. I have never seen such people for drinking quantities of cold water.

An old diary of 1859 gives an interesting insight into the condition of the roads then ; one is apt to think they are none too good now at the Canti. " In the middle of the street stands an iron bridge on wheels, to be used for crossing very muddy places, and an article of all well-appointed Sicilian streets."

Anyone who has visited Italy knows of the national habit of hanging things out of the window. The great nobles did it with good effect on feast days, when gorgeous carpets, tapestries, and brocades were fastened to every sill and balcony, making a splendid decoration ; lower down in the social scale the people hang out for utilitarian purposes, and they do it with persistent and frenzied zeal, till one wonders who are those who will wear all these clean clothes.

Whole lines of laundry work are draped from each window, between windows, on bamboo sticks that project, on bamboo sticks that stand upright. Sometimes a carpet, a rug, or a mattress blows in the breeze ; a hygienic custom, no doubt, but this display of household goods displeased a young Mayor of Palermo, who, newly clothed with civic dignity, was anxious to improve the look of the town by bringing in a by-law forbidding the exposure of the family washing in the principal streets. The law was never passed, never even laid before the Council, for, hearing of the proposal, the populace burned down the Mayor's palace just as a token of what they felt about the proposed legislation ; he took the hint, and wisely devoted to rebuilding his palace part of that energy he would have expended in obnoxious legislation. The Mayor was the Duc di Rudini, who earlier, as the Marchese di Rudini, an ardent young politician, so narrowly escaped being the fourteenth victim in the



S. GIOVANNI DEGLI EREMITI, FOUNDED BY GREGORY THE GREAT

cause of Liberty when the thirteen were shot, of which more anon.

One of the finest pictures in Palermo is by Lorenzo Credi: it is to be seen at the Olivella church; next door is the Convent of the Oratory of Filippini, and here it is that the Museo Nazionale has its home.

In the spacious courts and cloisters by Marvaglia in the long galleries of the convent, in the garden, the treasures are arranged indoors and out, according to the plans of the late Professor Antonio Salinas, a distinguished antiquary and Director of the Museum.

Here the story of the Island is told in stone and pottery, in gold, silver, and bronze, in wood and canvas and embroidery, and the arts are shown of those peoples who, having occupied Sicily, have passed away, leaving behind them these evidences of their work:

Foremost in interest are the Metopes, first examples of sculpture as we know it; they were discovered by two English architects in 1822 and were brought from the city of Selinunte, which was destroyed 409 B.C.

Mosaic flooring of the first and later centuries, splendid sarcophagi, are displayed. Etruscan antiquities and the great bronze ram of unknown antiquity which formerly stood on the ledge above the great gate of the Castle of Maniace at Syracuse, with its fellow, since destroyed. In 1448 they were taken by the Marquis of Geraci, afterwards confiscated, and brought to Palermo to decorate the Chiaramonte Palace, then to the present royal palace. Now the bronze is happily preserved in the Museum, but very badly placed, in a small room against a wall, so that one cannot walk round this magnificent specimen.

In the vase-room is the Gela Vase, the largest and

finest ever found in Sicily. It is notable for its decoration and its glaze. The coins are arranged according to cities and races, perhaps the most complete set known of those struck in Sicily from Byzantine times till 1836, including the baronial issues of the Chiaramonte and other great families.

The harbour and wharfside, when we first saw it, was bathed in sunset light; the steamers and sailing ships lay close to the Florio shipbuilding yard and the gardens of the Villa Igia, once a palace, now a hotel.

Half a dozen great derricks towered into the sky; men stood up in little boats, using the long sweeps to take comrades to their ships, and the staccato of a motor boat sounded incongruously.

Monte Pellegrino, overlooking it all, was amethyst against the rose and gold sky; the diagonal lines of the pilgrims' road were faintly visible. We felt rather than saw that Monreale, in its stainless beauty, was beyond.

Strolling along the quay side, towards the Botanical Gardens, we came to the yards of the marble workers, shops where modern-coloured tiles and terra-cotta jars are sold; nearby were picturesque eating-houses of the poor, with shining copper pans, full of steaming mixtures of beans, or spinach and sardines; pyramids of small black plums, sun-dried, not much bigger than raisins, and shelled chestnuts.

Away as far as the Marina, the terrace of the great Butera Palace rose out of the dusk, and sailors sat amongst their drawn-up boats, where they had been mending their fine-meshed nets. Near here is the little church of S. Mary of the Chain, so called because of the Catena or chain closing the ancient port. But



ONE OF THE METOPES OF SELINUNTE WHICH SHOW EARLY
EXAMPLES OF SCULPTURE APPLIED TO ARCHITECTURE
Galati



OLD CITY GATE OF PALERMO NEAR THE MARINA

its use has gone since the harbour was drained and the Piazza Marina built on the site. The palace of the Chiaramonte faces this Piazza, and is probably the most blood-stained pile in the whole of Palermo.

The Chiaramonte family, in the fourteenth century, in Sicily, have been likened to the Douglasses of Scotland. Their strongholds are to be found all over the Island. Their history began with Frederick III, surnamed the Simple, who left a daughter a minor, whose chief governor was Andrea Chiaramonte.

After plots and counter plots, wars and sieges, Andrea was beheaded in front of his own palace, for having aspired to the Crown. In the fifteenth century the High Executioner of the Realm, Bernardo Calirera, Count of Modica, who wished to marry the lovely Queen Anne of Navarre, came to the Chiaramonte Palace where she lived, and raged furiously because the lady escaped. In the next century the Viceroy was besieged here and eventually thrown out of the window with quite a number of his friends on to the pikes of the crowd below.

Then the grim Castle became the seat of the Inquisition, and what tortures were suffered there until 1782, when the vile institution was abolished by Sicily, it is not necessary to describe.

Then comes anti-climax: the walls are no longer red with the blood of tortured and dying victims. Justice holds sway, but only a few groans, in these latter days, echo every Saturday afternoon when those who have bought lottery tickets come to hear their sentence from the mouth of a white-robed child who proclaims the result decreed by the god of Chance in one of the apartments of the Chiaramonte Palace.

Italy may not always be able to give her people

bread, but she will always give them excitement, for State Lotteries bring in a very useful addition to the revenue ; unlucky victims are always ready to skimp and save and beg so as to be able to buy tickets, in fact, as we do here, to choose the wrong horse for the three-thirty.

A little further on, in this Marina district, we saw lights in a small, plainly-built church. A beggar crouched in one corner ; she was old, sinewy, and very bent, the kerchief of rusty black over her head had come untied, and her corded yellow throat was exposed. A flood of words poured from her lips when she heard our footsteps, and a skinny hand, holding a battered tin cup, was held out for alms. When we had passed in through the great carved wooden doors and lifted the leather curtain, we saw that the church was crowded with a throng, passive and devout in the centre, shifting and shuffling on the outskirts. It was difficult to find standing-room where one could hear the impassioned tone of the preacher as he leaned forward against the marble balustrade, beneath the old carved musicians' gallery.

There was an unkempt artistic force in all the scene, strikingly different from an orderly straight row of worshippers. Some were standing, some sat or knelt in the dim light against the misty background. Many of the faces were remarkable, none insignificant ; there was riveted attention, little movement, except where children fidgeted or strayed down less frequented aisles.

For thirty minutes the voice went on pleading, exhorting, threatening, using the whole gamut of expression in the Sicilian dialect of the people. Then it ceased, the tension broke, chairs were shifted back,

grating on the tiled pavement, shawls were drawn round grave, worn faces, a dozen people were left still kneeling, others hung round the doorway, and the beggar rattled her tin, and not in vain, for in Sicily, as elsewhere, the poor help the very poor. The crowd dispersed with inconceivable swiftness, doubtless with supper preparations in mind.

We wandered on, watching the life around us, and reading the road names for direction came to a cheerful, well-kept space, the Piazza of the Thirteen Victims, and I knew what lay behind the grim title, for the tale had been told to me with graphic force by one whose childhood had been spent amongst friends of those victims. Here is the story of a conspiracy of only sixty years ago, related by Mrs. Joseph Whitaker, *née* Scalea, who remembers many of the actors after those troublous times, for the Casa Scalea, in the Piazza Marina, was one of the most patriotic houses in Sicily. Such was the tyranny of the Neapolitan rule that princes and princesses were hiding patriots in their palaces, and plots to achieve Liberty were being organized by members of every class who loved the flag of red, white, and green. So suspicious were the authorities under the hated Maniscalco, head of the police, that the most ridiculous trifles were read as signs of plotting in favour of Victor Emmanuel. The cut of a man's beard, his upturned moustache, led to imprisonment, and it is said that at a dinner every guest was suspect who partook of the white spaghetti, with red tomato sauce, because the *chef* had added a green garnish and thus brought together the colours of the flag of Liberty.

On April 4, 1859, a premature insurrection broke out, headed by the young Marchese di Rudini, after-

wards Mayor of Palermo ; he escaped to England. Thirteen victims, however, were shot in the Piazza which now in name perpetuates their memory.

Soon after came Garibaldi and his Thousand to Marsala and the longed-for Unity was achieved. Sicily became one of the seven Provinces in a Free Kingdom.

What that meant to the Island, only those could tell who had known the country when but to think was to be suspect, to speak was ruin, and to act was death ; where talk at every table was hushed by the terror of priests and spies and foreign soldiers, where statesmen were arrested and chained to convicts, where women were flogged and men shot.

Secrecy was so necessary for the patriots that the whole printing press of the Revolutionaries could be packed into a flower-pot and soil spread above for hiding the tools, and this was done after every batch of leaflets had been printed, which baffled Maniscalco and his crowd. The flower-pot is now in the National Museum, with its precious contents, mute witness of Sicily's Reign of Terror.

Beyond the Piazza of the Victims on our homeward way, how natural to come to the Via Cavour, named after Italy's great statesman. Mr. Bolton King says of him :

He has been likened to Bismarck, because he welded a kingdom from a mass of small states ; but Cavour's mind was bigger, broader, juster, full of faith in humanity, of freedom, of hate for tyranny and intolerance. It had none of Bismarck's scorn for other rights, none of the cynicism which, in the name of lawless might, was built on the wreck of Justice. Cavour brought Italy into being without a crime

towards a sister nation, and had he lived he might have done much to save Europe from the evil which Bismarck's contagious influence has wrought.

Our wanderings in the still darkness of a spring night have brought us voices of the past, echoes of sighing victims, ghosts of battle, murder and sudden death, songs of victory, whispers of hope, while all around is the burgeoning life of to-day, declaring itself vociferously in Palermo, a city quick to be happy, quick to throw off despair, a city where there are things that are clever, foolish, picturesque, magnificent, ugly, and always—unexpected.

CHAPTER II

SOME TEMPLES AND A JOURNEY

THE sinister word Ruin does not apply to Segesta's Temple, it is so perfect in itself, so complete in its unfinished beauty.

Of the town of Egesta of the Greeks, Segesta of the Romans, founded before the dawn of history, there are few remains, a Græco-Roman Theatre and the Temple being the chief. There is an atmosphere of legend concerning the foundation of this Elymian city and its association with Trojans and the great Æneas. It is not till 454 B.C. that its history is on firm ground. The Athenians made an alliance with Egesta and, quarrelling with the Greeks of Selinus about the rites of marriage and a certain boundary, the people of Egesta sent to their allies at Athens for help. Before deciding to give it some Athenians visited Egesta and were completely taken in by a very simple fraud with regard to silver plate, which had been gilt and which was handed round in large quantities to every house in turn where the envoys were entertained. This childish ruse completely deceived the Athenians, who concluded an alliance for a small matter of sixty talents earnest money. So the tale goes on; the allies, of course, proved unsatisfactory, a tyrant was appealed to with the usual result, Segesta's enemies were conquered, but on the return of the conqueror 10,000 of the richest of the inhabitants were

murdered for the sake of their possessions, whilst many others were sold as slaves.

The town was repopled by a "mixed Greek" population. The date of its eventual destruction is unknown. Authorities agree that it still existed in A.D. 400, but had disappeared before the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century.

Segesta's Temple stands, a diadem in stone, on the brow of a mountain. In 1833 John Henry Newman, afterwards Cardinal, writes :

In all Sicily the chief sight has been Segesta, its ruins, with its temple. Oh wonderful sight ! full of the most strange pleasure. Strange, from the position of the town, its awful desolateness, the beauty of the scenery, rich even in winter, its historical recollections by contrast with the misery of its population, the depth of squalidness and brutality by which it is surrounded. It has been a day in my life to have seen Egesta.

The Græco-Roman theatre is one of the most important in Sicily and is two miles beyond the temple, up a steep ascent.

Cut in the living rock, the tiers of seats are divided into seven blocks; the last row of the lower seats is furnished with a back—a very obvious convenience, which no other Greek theatre in Sicily provides : only the foundations of the scena remain, at the sides there are two sculptured Satyrs.

Like all Greek theatres, it is so placed that a magnificent view beyond the stage can be enjoyed by the audience. On one side the gulf of Castellammare, on the other the mountains of Alcamo, the river Cremsis, a thin line : opposite, the hill of Calatafimi, crowned

with the town; on the west, the blue peak of Eryx, where once stood the Temple of Venus.

Segesta looks down on the scene of the first heroic struggle of the Garibaldini for the Liberation of Italy. Over these hills, in the month of May 1860, the news of Garibaldi's landing at Marsala had passed like a wind, fanning the flame of righteous insurrection.

We could almost hear the bells of a campanile ring out a welcome, and see in imagination the people pouring down the hill to greet their deliverers, shouting for Italy and Victor Emmanuel.

The Thousand came into the village street of Vila armed with mostly useless muskets, and there the men filled their ragged pockets with oranges and lemons (which pockets their General had insisted on having stitched on to every coat to save transport). The groves were full of fruit, as they are to-day, and in the blazing sun the men sucked lemons as they sheltered behind the 3-foot terraces of stones on the mountain side, gaining meanwhile breath for the next rush upward, across the open, before the Neapolitans could thrust them down. Terrible struggles there were on Pietralunga's steep sides, against a foe superior in numbers and in arms. What heat! what thirst! The battle seemed lost; but the Hermit of Caprera had learnt his guerilla warfare on the Pampas, during the war of the Wilderness. He knew this skirmish meant the conquest of the whole island. "Here we make Italy or die," he had said, and his spirit revived his men for the fierce uphill battle.

There came a time when, only a few yards overhead, the enemy's larger forces might have swept the little band of patriots away. The charge of the hated Neapolitans sounded, but no man responded; then

stones were hurled down, those terrible blocks of limestone so ready to hand, and Garibaldi knew that the ammunition of the enemy was spent.

After a final desperate charge the Neapolitans rushed headlong down on the other side of the hill which divides the battlefield from Calatafimi; and that was the end.

On the height there now stands a monument where the Italians pressed round their deliverer on May 12, 1860, and pathetic little crosses mark the graves of heroes.

Years ago Calatafimi, the Saracen Calatafio, was the starting point for a visit to Segesta, but Cardinal Newman's restrained condemnation of the accommodation lingers in our memory. "Calatafimi, where we slept; I dare not mention facts," makes one thankful for the fine mountain roads, and the car which now makes Palermo possible as a starting point.

Westward through the town, beyond fields where brood-mares feed, the road runs zig-zag up Montelepre, leaving the great bulk of Pellegrino on the right; soon the rich valley of the Golden Shell is far below; the little promontory formed by Monte Zafferana and Monte Calatafimi, looking more than ever like the kneeling camel with his forefeet in the blue waters of the Bay. How realistically he seems to await the rich load from orange and lemon groves on the landward side!

On we go, bumping over deep ruts and trying to remember how much worse it would have been to ride on mule-back up the boulder-strewn torrent beds, which was the only mode of progression a century ago.

Now heaps of graded stones by the roadside show earnest of goodwill, and a steam-roller of latest pattern

is indicative of the intention of road authorities with regard to upkeep.

Stout, low walls guard hairpin turns, and the clever Sicilian chauffeurs are equal to the tendency in local traffic to journey mainly on the wrong side, a tendency not peculiar to Sicily. Here comes a sweet-faced madonna, the becoming black-fringed shawl over her head ; she allows her mule to descend the steep road without guidance. Her red and purple-striped saddlebags, home woven and stout as leather, are stuffed with commodities needed in the one-roomed dwelling, whither she returns from Toretta, the little mountain town.

Who knows what tit-bits of information she will have to impart, when she next waits her turn at the fountain : what news of the Easter Miracle Play, of the special church ceremonies, of the repair of the roadside shrines, of courtship, of vendetta, and all the other gossip, gleaned as she disposed of her eggs and cauliflowers and obtained the family supply of groceries !

We pass Partinico, where merry Sicilian babies wave hands to the *forestieri*, and none asks for soldi in this thriving wine centre. Of the ancient Palameta, a Norman town which stood near, we see nothing.

This is not one of Sicily's rich blue cloudless days, the fusion of distant mountains with clouds is too subtle to define : wisps of vapour are caught on the hill-tops like pale grey chiffon round a lady's head, then a sharp little breeze whirls upwards from a gully and tears it asunder : the colour of earth and sky is faint blue-grey and a " parsimonious green," not even the soil is ruddy, for we are passing limestone rocks and wild fields of asphodel, from whose sword-like



THE TEMPLE CUSTODIANS, SEGESTA



BEYOND PALERMO. CASTELLO GANCI AT THE POINT

and abundant foliage the almost colourless flower springs a metre high, like some pale lily. There is a feeling of depression hard to define ; we are amongst immemorial wrecks of earlier mountain ranges and of civilizations dead and gone.

Descending from the pass, we come to a *villaggio abbandonato* ; here is a hollow, wind-swept town, gaunt and empty. The four walls of the houses are roofless, great skeleton warehouses and stores yawn wide ; the breeze sweeps through the square gaps where once were windows, grass grows in the streets, a huge cellar door sags sideways on a single hinge ; a campanile crumbles stone by stone, piling the heap at its foot.

Why this desolation ? All around the well-tilled fields, even to the precincts of the town, are eloquent of workers' needs.

The curse of malaria lies upon the village and has led to its total abandonment : stumps of eucalyptus planting show that it was not without a struggle that these well-built stone houses were deserted ; but the scourge was too strong and the labourers used the only remedy at their command. They fled from their fever-haunted homes in the valley, and ascended to where the pure mountain air renders them immune from the dreaded malady.

Each day they descend to till the ground beneath the olive trees, to plant their beans, cut bamboo stakes and prune their vines, riding down, sometimes four miles or more, from the mountain city that we see above us ; they leave their animals to browse as best they may by the roadside where they find their only forage, then, the day's work done, they return to sleep in the wholesome mountain air.

The jingle of carretta bells warns us that one of the carved and brightly painted carts may be expected at the next corner, and on the wrong side of the road, and there it is: the driver wears a hooded Sicilian cloak of thick blue frieze cloth, for it is cold on these mountain heights; he sits hunched up; his cart is piled with the little barrels called trentino, holding $5\frac{1}{2}$ gallons. This small size is generally used for transport of the wine whose highly prized flavour is only obtained from grapes grown on the terraces high up on the mountain side.

Behind him comes a procession of five great red lorries, drawn by mild-eyed, wide-horned oxen; they bear the immense barrels at a slow and stately pace, while the men walk beside encouraging, threatening, or coaxing with strange sounds which were in use in Dante's time and before. "Atia," literally meaning "you there," is the ox-driver's word for anyone who gets in his way, or "Iamuninni," "come on," "gee up," "let me come."

Then our iron steed leaves all behind, climbing again the steep zigzag until a lifeless, soundless waste of bleak rock is reached, where even the wind whistles with muted note; the whole landscape lay before us in honeysuckle colouring, faintly gold, with a pale flush here and there.

Down into the valley again we drive between acres of vineyard, and there is a network of perfume from the flowery borders of the road. The fields are trenched like our English potato fields, except that at 4-feet distances the leafless vine (for it is early spring) is tied to a stout bamboo: small plantations of bamboo grow here and there to provide the stakes.

As we neared Alcamo there was thin bell-music

from the campaniles, hardly louder at first than the song of birds, but in the narrow street of the town the noise is insistent. Lemons grow in the gardens, the soil looks as rich as Devon loam ; no wonder the Sicilian poet was inspired by the beauty of his home.

Vincenzo d'Alcamo, of the Middle Ages, one of the first song-writers of the Island, lived here. There are fifteenth-century frescoes in the Chiesa Maggiore, a still earlier church of the Carmine, a castle half ruinous, and reliefs of more recent date by Serpotta.

From this town came Baron S. Anna, a territorial magnate, bringing to Garibaldi the first reinforcements : stalwart men, well mounted and carrying their guns across the saddle-bow—farmers all, in goat-skins and velveteen coats.

The name Alcamo is one of those words which hold in remembrance the Saracenic occupation of the Island, for it was given in honour of Al Karmuk, the Emir, who led a victorious army into Sicily in A.D. 828. The town is still Oriental-looking, and numerous Arabo-Norman remains are to be found.

Towards the third hour from our start we found a wayside shelter, where mules and donkeys awaited us, for the rest of the ascent is too steep and rough for the car.

A little shallow river had to be crossed, which once had stepping-stones, but these the donkey drivers took away as bad for trade. The sure-footed animals picked their way amongst the boulders, and climbed the steep hill with never a stumble.

Every cranny in the rock where earth could lodge, every space between the loose boulders by the side of the path, was decked with flowers : crane's-bill and iris, asphodel and sunspurge, evergreen lentisk

with its smooth leaves, bladder campion, and half a dozen different saxifrages and stunted wild palmetta.

Surely in such high places one may find peace : the subconscious mind claims freedom from the common round of duty. But a quick negative comes—there stands a tiny shepherd boy intent on his daily task.

His features are those of some Greek ancestor who might have stood as model for Praxiteles. The Sicilian cloak is blown aside, and we see nether limbs clad in white goat-skin with the silky fur outside, leather thongs tie on the rough shoes and felt socks, and he holds a reed, on which a saint is carved, probably with his own knife, or that of his father or shepherd grandfather.

Where is his flock ? Like flies high up on what looks, from below, to be sheer stone wall, are cream-white dots ; we know that they are the little mountain sheep of Barbary breed, cropping the short grass that grows between the rocks.

The boy stares at the muleback cavalcade, waves a hand full of wild marigolds, and climbs slowly upwards towards his charge.

The guide-books describe the Temple of Segesta as being the grandest in the whole Island, give its length as 191 feet, its width as 76 feet, its architecture as Doric, the number of its columns as 36.

Such details convey no idea of the simple yet grandiose majesty of that eastward-facing Temple ; unfinished, the handle pieces which served to raise the immense blocks to their places have never been sawn off, and still stand, since the fourth century before Christ, mute witnesses of warlike interruption.

Lofty desolate mountains surround the building,



RE-ERECTED COLUMNS OF THE GYMNASIUM, SOLUNTO, ON MONTE CATALFANO. THE CITY WAS FOUNDED BY PHENICIANS AND IS SOMETIMES CALLED "THE SICILIAN POMPEII"

but instead of being dwarfed, its perfect beauty gives a puissance in which size has no place, sharp embattled precipices of rock, toppling spires of limestone, seem as gates to guard such treasure.

Segesta's Temple stands, a diadem in stone, on the brow of the mountain.

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The journey from Palermo to Girgenti entails a cut right through the Island, and we wondered, as we sped by rail through the last miles of the valley of the Golden Shell, if the centre of Sicily could be as beautiful as its northern coast, or if we should find in the south land barren or forbidding.

Here is the train stopping at Termini, the place so useful to Hercules, who came to be refreshed by nymphs when wearied by driving those cattle of Geryon. It was probably the springs—the Aqua del Binuto, the Aqua Santa, and the Aqua di Termini—which refreshed the hero, though one dare not mention arthritis, rheumatism, and cutaneous affections in connection with him: however, the hot springs of Termini cure many evils, and over-fatigue in super cattle-driving is probably amongst them.

Like all places where there are medicinal springs, Termini is full of Roman remains, and its coins most suitably bear the cock of the doctors' god Æsculapius. The mediæval castle towers above as we wait at the station, and one of its twelve churches has been turned into a hospital.

Now we come to Lercara or, to give it its full title, Lercara Friddi. A sulphur district, the northernmost in the Island, our way from here on to Girgenti lies mostly through the sulphur-mining country, as

one sees by the great mounds of refuse; the yellow ingots lie piled in stacks in the station awaiting more trucks and a dozen are already loaded. It is said that the criminal classes are mostly recruited from the sulphur workers, and we feel with deep sympathy for them, that, in their working conditions "being good and being happy" must be somewhat difficult.

Most of the attributes of Hades seem to be reproduced with regard to fumes of burning sulphur and the intense heat necessitating almost nudity of the workers, who are called *piccourini*; the shafts are sunk deep and from dark passages come thin smoke and the dull booms of explosions which indicate blasting. Boys (*carusi*) bear the yellow stuff in trucks to the surface, and a law has been passed to prevent those of tender years from working in the mines, but the people themselves evade them and one is told that the work in sulphur mines is not unhealthy. When the ore is brought up it is melted in a calcarone or kiln, and the pure mineral run off into moulds in which it cools and becomes the solid blocks we saw at the station. Each block weighs $122\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., and when borne by mules one block is put on either side of the beast in hanging baskets or saddle-bags, two being a load. We met a long train of these asses in a country road near Girgenti, the port of Empedocles close by being one of the places where much of it is shipped. Enormous fortunes are made out of sulphur.

At Castronuovo, the next station, we are far from the town which is built on Monte Cassaro. Beautiful yellow marble is found in the mountains near, and a peaceful memory of the place lies in the fact that in 1302 a treaty was made between the Aragonese and Angevins, which ended the terrible Sicilian Vesper war.

We see in the distance more or less ruined buildings ; the castle, standing up on high rocks, was erected by the ever-building Roger.

Jogging along in the leisurely State Railway of Sicily, there is time to wonder whence came these Normans with their building craze. Virile and executive, they catch the imagination—how came they to be here ?

A good many of them were in the Holy Land in the eleventh century, making vows, enjoying pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine, helping on the Crusades and engaging in them, in some capacity. Practising, preparing, as a band for their conquests.

Then the Prince of Capua gave them some land and a little town, Aversa, in Southern Italy, because they had helped him to win something he wanted. Then the Duke of Naples gave to a Norman his daughter in marriage, and more hungry Normans came from their own poorish country to see what they could pick up. Then General George Maniaces, a Greek, of Etna, asked their leader to help him to get rid of the Saracens in Sicily—their reward for success would be half the loot and half the towns ; and chief William de Hauteville and his two brothers Humphrey and Drogo, all handsome and charming Normans, helped General George and they conquered Sicily ; but the General was a silly man and so crooked that he didn't pay what he had solemnly promised, not a single town was awarded to the conquering and useful Normans, nor the half of those conquered treasures, so they went home without their wages and bided their time, and a few more de Hauteville brothers turned up, joining Humphrey, William, and Drogo, for there were twelve brothers in all, a very useful dozen, and they set about conquering

whatever they saw, and taking all they could lay their hands on, because General George of Etna had broken his word. Trouble generally comes of dishonour, but unfortunately it is not always the liar who is the chief sufferer.

When Roger, the youngest, arrived (is there not always a halo of romance about the youngest son since the days of Jack and the Beanstalk?) Norman rule was already established in Sicily, and he was invited to come across by treacherous and time-serving advisers.

So, handsome, wise, and debonair, Count Roger took up his abode in beautiful Sicily, and immediately began to build churches, castles, bridges, and towers, with the help of Saracen workmen left behind and most strangely neither massacred nor sold into slavery as was the fate usually of conquered races. Sicilians of the present day look back with romantic pleasure to the Arab occupation, but the two centuries of their rule, though stamping indelible marks on the arts, never succeeded in raising the country from the tumultuous conditions of insecure dominion.

So much for the arrival of the Normans in Sicily. We feel sure they must have ridden on snails or tortoises and not the Sicilian State Railway, or they would never have got there so quickly.

We are getting into the region of mud volcanoes, formidable horrors, which are about 800 feet above sea level, on a special calcareous hill about 135 feet higher than the surrounding country.

Near Caldare at Maccaluba (another Saracen name) there are a great many little cones only about half a yard high, whose craters are filled with boiling mud: hydrogen gas issues with a hissing noise from adjacent

cracks in this unpleasant mountain, and when the craters boil over all vegetation in the neighbourhood is destroyed. Etna also makes a speciality of mud volcanoes at Salinella, but with little success compared with Maccaluba.

How characteristic of things Sicilian, that after contemplating these ugly mud abominations, we should slip straight into the neighbourhood of what Pindar calls "the most beautiful city of mortals." Agragas to the Greeks, Agrigentum to the Romans, Girgenti in our time. It was one of the most glorious of Hellenic cities, not as powerful as Syracuse, but as splendidly dowered.

Long before the Greeks came there was a town here, where the land slopes steeply to the sea; then it was colonised from neighbouring Gela, but soon outstripped the mother city, under the laws of Charondas of Catana. Then Phalaris the Cretan emerges as a prominent figure; having been entrusted with the building of the temple to Zeus Polieus, he used the men and money to build what was the strongest place in the city, armed the prisoners, hired soldiers, and while the citizens were enjoying themselves at the festival of Ceres, made himself tyrant. This is the monster who, having caused a brass bull to be made for the burning and torture of his enemies, had Perillus, its maker (suitably named), placed inside, as its first victim, and enjoyed the shrieks issuing from the red-hot mouth of the bull.

Phalaris probably plagiarized the idea of the burning bull from neighbouring Carthage, where children were sacrificed by fire to a bull-headed Moloch. Perhaps the Greeks, who hated any form of monarchy, fathered on to the tyrant this example of legendary cruelty; however, the bull really existed, because Diodorus

writes about it and Lucien as well. Phalaris, notwithstanding his appreciation of philosophers and his 148 letters on morals (crushingly proved to be forgeries by Bentley), was later stoned to death.

We saw the little Græco-Roman Temple called the Oratory of Phalaris adjoining the garden of S. Nicolo, a lovely relic, which had just been examined by Professors Orsi and Marconi in the spring of 1925, and the place was being made tidy after the excavators had done their work.

After the death of Phalaris two sages ruled with such success that the inhabitants, well protected and well fed, became too luxurious and decadence set in. However, Theron, whose son-in-law was Gelo at Syracuse, dealt with this tendency with great skill, and Agrigentum continued to flourish.

After the defeat of the Carthaginians at Himera there were so many captives at Agrigentum that many citizens owned at least 500 each, and as to the municipality, they had so many that they set them to work at hewing the stone of which the glorious temples are built, working at subterranean canals, digging a gigantic fish-pond, though the sea, full of fish, was only a mile away, and constructing innumerable aqueducts.

Under Theron's rule Agrigentum reached its zenith, trade and agriculture flourished, sumptuous architecture, sculpture, and painting beautified the town, and at the court were sages and poets of Greece. Pindar, Bacchylides, Æschylus were there, and when a war threatened, peace was successfully negotiated by the great poet Simonides. (Why have we no poet amongst our Cabinet Ministers, and on what Committees are the poets at the League of Nations?) Of course, Theron's

son was not as good a man as his father, and was first banished and then killed, and when Agrigentum threw off the tyranny all the rest of Sicily was emancipated. Empedocles introduced "principles of equality which gave the aristocrats equal rights with the people." The one exception to this rule was Empedocles himself, and he insisted on being regarded as a god.

He was a good doctor, but any patients he cured had to join his train as slaves; he seems to have understood some of the laws of hygiene, but was a bit of a charlatan, and when he cured sick people said, "I, Jupiter, have given them back life."

Perhaps his head was turned by the people of Selinus, who, being plagued with malaria, which was cured by Empedocles uniting two streams and thus strengthening a sluggish current and draining marshes, accorded him divine honours as fee for his expert advice. Two coins were struck in commemoration, and twelve splendid specimens of these have just been given to the British Museum, June 1925. Here is Mr. G. F. Hill's description of one type: "Heracles, representative of health and strength and light, subduing the Cretan bull" (the primitive Greek personification of a river took the form of a bull); on the reverse, "Hypsas sacrificing to the health god, a serpent, attendant of Æsculapius, the physicians' deity: a humorous touch is given by a long-legged bird which stalks away, his marshy haunt having been taken from him."

Agrigentum suddenly fell; the city of Segesta had summoned the Carthaginians, a very dangerous thing to do, for they later attacked Agrigentum, and though, after destroying some tombs, ill luck attended them, which included plague and lightning, the gods were appeased by the sacrifice of a boy to Moloch, and a

great many animals, which were cast into the sea for Neptune's benefit, and Agrigentum was besieged and eventually betrayed by mercenaries. The spoils were incalculable; the works of art were sent to Carthage, where the Romans afterwards got them, the houses and temples were burnt and afterwards smashed to pieces, and this at the zenith of the age of Pericles.

All this happened in 406 B.C. and the town never recovered, though a few people returned, and a tyrant or two struggled to revive its glories, and Romans and Carthaginians fought and alternately butchered each other and reburnt the city, and so it continued, "more long lived in its misery than in its glory," until A.D. 825, when it was conquered by the Saracens. In 1086 Count Roger, the Norman, drove out the last Emir, Kamul, and the place sunk into deeper decay.

The town of the present day overlooking the sea is picturesque in the evening light; its narrow climbing streets on the Camicus are a huddle of great walls and stairways, crowned by its church of the fourteenth century, where the lovely Guido Rene Madonna hangs in the Sacristy, with the silver image of S. Gerlandus. There is also that celebrated Sarcophagus on which are sculptured scenes from the story of Phædra. The lady, falling unconscious, is seated on a chair, a woman servant holds her arm, and Eros with bent bow is directing his aim towards her. There are numbers of figures—young girls, hunters, Hippolytus lance in hand, with horses and hounds: the cactus is shown on one of the panels, the characteristic growth of Sicily.

The noisy, active life of the twentieth century was going on as we left the Cathedral. Goats were being driven to the cottage doors for milking. The small

merchants were plying their trade languidly, for it was time to close their shops. A great cavernous doorway had been made bright with vegetables, piles of green broccolitti, bundles of fennel, showing alternately great round white roots or feathery tops, the small Sicilian tomatoes in cherrylike bunches, cauliflowers of brilliant crimson, and lemons in golden heaps or tied up with their dark green leaves, rivalling the richer hue of the oranges, almost as big as cocoanuts, or the small, delicately pungent mandarinis.

Close by, at the corner, where the old grey wall joined the Piazza, a chestnut roaster stooped over his rusty tripod, and the savoury smell of toasting nuts came strongly as the man fanned the glow with the round plaited mat with short bamboo handle.

Loiterers, children, town gentlefolks, strolled up to take their evening relaxation after the day's work. They stood about, looking out to sea, in twos and threes, talking and laughing, the old men garrulous.

Light failed, the bird's-eye view of Temple-strewn fields was blotted out, and in the dusk one tried in vain to imagine the richness of former days—pale ghosts of chariots, three hundred of them winding across the plain to meet the victors returning from the Olympic Games ; the millionaire Gellias, as we should call him now (though probably no fortune of the present day would equal his riches, in land and slaves and works of art), his entertaining of high and low, giving to each changes of raiment ; statues put up to favourite horses ; statues put up to pet dicky-birds : and then another act—Carthaginians—and all swept away, the dream passes.

It is dark, the last group of gossips leave the Piazza, and a single light in the hotel window makes me wonder

how long it was that Byron stood at the one window in the one inn in the street at Girgenti.

Next morning we drove in blazing sunshine past the Hill of Minerva to see the ruined glories standing calm beneath the flight of Time. Excavations, financed by Captain A. Hardcastle, were going on in the Norman church S. Biagio, on the slope of the Rock of Athena, and as my MS. goes to press I hear that a mountain sanctuary of Demeter has been discovered, where the first of the colonists gathered for safety in the sixth century B.C., before they constructed the city in the plain below, the ruins of whose splendours lie scattered before us. There are two round altars in this early sanctuary, one for blood offerings, the other for votive offerings, and many Kernoi or votive lamps, saucer shaped, with apertures for flame, lay heaped at its foot : other objects were found, dating from different epochs.

We drove first to the Convent of S. Nicolo, whose Corinthian capitals are embedded in ancient walls, and where a temple has been adapted for Christian worship.

The ruined choir is shut off and used for keeping fowls, the cloister is ruinous, a few Gothic arches remain, and a marble cornice of an old Greek building. A straggling, untidy garden gives perfume of lavender and rosemary hedges ; steps lead up to a great Roman cistern, intact, but empty, where forty elephants might bathe : from the terrace one sees the golden temples that stand along the edge of the southern wall of the city, and beyond the Libyan Sea. There is a mist of almond blossom ; in the middle distance are the stone pines of a mediæval garden. One hears with a shock that this Convent of S. Nicolo is for sale.

A double row of the cypress trees leads nowhere ;

perhaps they once bordered a busy road to a temple : now, growing wheat cumbers their great trunks, and the spiral line of beauty leads into a lemon grove, and beyond is a plantation of olives. Girgenti owed most of its wealth to its trade in oil and wine with Carthage, during the prosperous period under old Theron, whose reputed tomb is beyond the Temple of Hercules.

One sees also from the terrace, away in the distance, the Port of Empedocles, one of the chief ports of the sulphur trade, and one sighs to think that the mole built by Charles V is chiefly composed of massive blocks of pillars from the Temple of Jupiter.

In spite of such depredation and of the hand of time, of ruin and fire by enemies, there are more monuments of the great Acragas of the Greeks left in a fair state of preservation here than at Solunto, where only the great pillars of the Gymnasium stand erect. Gela, Himera and Camarina have totally disappeared, while even Syracuse herself has nothing to compare with the Temples of Agrigentum.

The beautiful Temple of Juno Lacinia, which stands on a natural hill, is on a substructure of four steps. Of the Doric columns, so disposed that thirteen stood at the sides and six at each end, one side only remains, supporting the entablature ; of the façade only two columns and a part of the architrave are there, the others have either lost their capitals or been overthrown. Marks of fire show the work of the enemy, and also where the multi-millionaire, as we should call the entertainer Gellias in these days, burned his treasures, the treasures of the temple, his entire family, and himself on the night the Carthaginians took Acragas in 406 B.C.

By this act, Diodorus tells us, he prevented three

evils—the impiety of the enemy against the gods, the plunder of vast treasure, and the abuse of his own body.

Gellias, like many small and plain men, was very conceited, and was wild with anger when, being sent as ambassador to Centuripos, he was laughed at for being so small and having so great a reputation, whereupon he said “Agrigentum sent only comely men to handsome cities, and to mean towns, little men like himself.” I think on the whole Gellias gave as good as he received.

How can any building be at once so massive and yet so delicately lovely as the golden Temple of Concord, which also stands on a hill and, except for its roof, is perfect, for it was not destroyed by the Carthaginians? Gregorovius says :

In contemplating a Doric temple, the traveller cannot refrain from observing to what grand and simple rhythmic measures the life of the Greeks must have moved when the collective national sentiment . . . could be represented in such form. . . .

I hold at least that the Christian cathedral of Monreale, the most beautiful counterpart of this Temple of Concord in its connection with the life of the Middle Ages, must remain more intelligible to us. Did Sicily possess nothing beyond these huge buildings, the monuments of two great periods of culture, it would on their account still remain a marvellous country.

It is strange to be going upstairs in a temple which was built 500 years before Christ, but having been invited to do so, we saw the sea looking much as it did when the temple was built, and so the best thing we could have looked at. On the whole, the sea wears better than these places where enthusiasts burnt themselves and their families.



TEMPLE OF CONCORDIA THE BEST
PRESERVED IN SICILY. A STAIRCASE
LEADS TO THE ROOF



TEMPLE OF JUNO WHERE GILLIAS BURNT
HIS FAMILY, HIS TREASURES, AND HIMSELF
ON THE NIGHT OF THE CARTHUSIAN VIC-
TORY, B.C. 406



A VIEW OF THE COAST ON THE WAY TO CEFALÙ

There, close to the temple, was the little stall of one of the brothers Caltagirone, who are licensed to dig for antiquities on condition of submitting their finds to the Museum. They are old men now and have followed their trade for thirty years and more. The proof of the genuine nature of their wares lies in the fact that they cost much less money than would counterfeits. Terra-cotta figurines, lamps, toilet articles, bronze rings, bracelets, weights, and any amount of coins are displayed on this improvised antiquity stall. Nearly all the tombs that have been opened belong to the period before 406 B.C. to the destruction of the city.

There is a winding road which follows the line of the old wall between the Temples of Juno and Concordia; it is hewn out of virgin stone. The Christians of the fifth century cut their tombs in it, leaving such a thin layer of rock that the sharp dust-laden wind has cut through in many places.

Wild myrtle and acanthus grow by the side of the marble road, rutted by the chariot wheels of long ago, just as they may be seen leading up to the Greek theatre at Syracuse, with 6-inch ruts. On the old white road a great Red Admiral butterfly alighted, opening his wings in the hot sun. A little sulphur moth poised on a branch of cherry blossom, birds were singing, full throated, and beneath our feet, still undiscovered, lay treasures overlooked by the spoilers, awaiting discovery after two and twenty centuries.

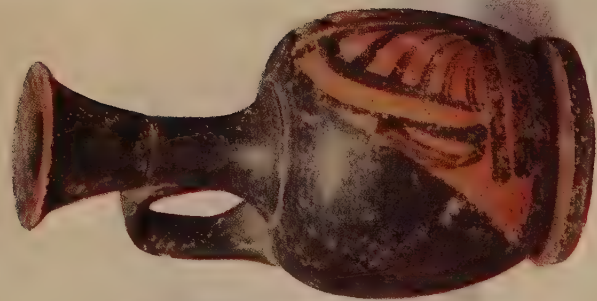
The Temple of Olympian Jove, or the Olympieion, the most celebrated and the largest temple in Sicily, like Segesta's Temple, was never finished, for Carthaginians sacked the town before the roof had been built, and so gigantic was its size and strength that

though they pillaged it, its destruction was not attempted. Suffering from storms and earthquakes, it survived till the Middle Ages; a small portion, supported by three of its giant Telamons, remained erect until December 9, 1401. This fragment, with the three giant figures, is a part of the city's coat-of-arms to the present day. The ruins, gigantic blocks of heaped-up stones, were freely used for building purposes, and one is staggered by the colossal size, where a single fluting in a column is deep enough to hold a man.

We saw one of the great Telamons, no longer supporting an entablature, but itself being supported by Mother Earth. It was cleverly put together like a child's puzzle by the antiquary, Raffaele Politi, and measures 25 feet. There is a little wire fence all round it to prevent the touch of the unlearned or the depredations of the souvenir hunter; an anticlimax it seemed for this stupendous figure, lying so prone and smashed, yet not without dignity. One can only imagine the chaste and superb beauty of that 340-foot building, where were rows of such figures. A reconstructed drawing fills one with amazement.

Then we wandered on to the Temple of Hercules and thought of that robber-in-chief Verres, who tried to steal the great bronze statue of Hercules, and Charles V, who stole most of the cella of the temple for his tiresome mole. Even seventy years ago the builders of the Villa Avria were allowed to continue the thefts.

It is interesting to see the restoration by Professor Cavallari of the angle of one of the two Temples Castor and Pollux, out of four Doric columns and a piece of the pediment, whose ornament one is able



VASE WITH INCISED DECORATION FROM THE PHENICIAN COLONY AT MOTYA

to distinguish ; it is considered one of the most beautiful fragments in Sicily.

A large green lizard basked in the sunshine up above, and seemed to be testing the quality of modern restoration by creeping round ; he finally entered a small crevice as if to investigate more closely.

We wandered down a pathway through a field of oats to the Piscina, once a great Latomia or quarry which was used as a reservoir or fish-pond in Roman times, the end having been blocked up. Now the water has filtered away and, in the fertile soil, grow orange trees. Diodorus describes the place :

The Agrigentines likewise sunk a fish-pond at great cost and expense, seven furlongs in compass, and twenty cubits in depth. Into this water was brought from fountains and rivers, and by that means it was sufficiently supplied with fish of all sorts, both for food and pleasure. And upon this pond there fell and rested a great multitude of swans, which gave a most pleasant and delightful prospect to the eye ; but by the neglect of succeeding ages it grew up with mud, and at last, through length of time, became entirely dry ground. But the soil there being very fat and rich, they have planted it with vines and replenished it with all sorts of trees, which yields to those of agriculture a very great revenue.

As we looked at the " fat, rich " soil and the orange grove now planted in it, there came to us one of Sicily's lean old women, worn with hard work and poor food. She took an orange from her basket and spoke eloquently with lips and with long, thin, brown hands, making the gestures which every Sicilian understands and which are so easily interpreted even by the foreigner unaccustomed to gesture. Movements of

the shoulder were used as well, and nods emphasized words ; with her was a skinny, shy, five-year-old girl, in a faded green petticoat and lemon-coloured head kerchief. She was brown as a berry and had great timid eyes with the heavy lidded droop of the true Southerner.

We bought their oranges and wondered how many of such folks Gellias would have fed at his table and clothed, as he did the 500 horsemen who were liberally entertained and furnished with cloaks and coats : on the other hand, that “ the poorer classes were sold into slavery ” is an awkward fact—B.C. methods are a little disconcerting.

CHAPTER III

CASTROGIOVANNI (ENNA)

TURNED out of the train one and a half hours late on to a bleak stretch of line where a couple of boards served as pathway, we waited in the rain till the carriages, moving in the opposite direction, had gone off, then, crossing to the station shelter, joined an uncomfortable group of travellers.

No matter: are we not on our way to the centre of Sicily, Enna—the centre of the world, some of the ancients had claimed; the highest inhabited town in the Island, where Roger and Robert, two of those redoubtable Norman brothers, had defeated the main army of the Saracens? We must not be discouraged though Gazetteers assert that this mountain town suffers from a “rigorous winter climate” and the rainfall is 19·4 inches a year.

Here the Goddess of the Harvest was worshipped; the Temple of Demeter had been the wonder of the world, so there must have been sunshine sometimes. The temple is no longer here, but the rainfall remains.

Such thoughts are reassuring, but do not tend to warmth, and the station bus, the only vehicle which climbs the winding road, was over-full of passengers as damp as ourselves.

One had awaited the arrival of friends who had failed to materialize, another suffered from a missed

connection because of the usual unpunctuality of the railway. A lean youth with woolly red hair (very usual in Sicily) had failed to receive a parcel : it will probably arrive to-morrow, or to-morrow, or to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow, at any rate when he has ceased to want it, it will turn up. Sicilian railway officials may be depended on for that.

A priest deposited his wet umbrella incommodiously against the legs of a protesting commercial traveller, whose heavy luggage had been placed thunderously on the roof. The rain continued to fall heavily ; we are getting on nicely towards the 19·4 inches due this year. Ascending further into the bosom of the clouds at each turn of the mountain road, Calasci-betta, the twin city, was invisible. It was the favourite summer residence of Peter II of Aragon : I expect he knew the climate and did not come till May. Johannes Tower, where the Imperial troops took refuge from the Saracens, who, in their turn, were defeated by Roger, was unreal and spectral in its misty drapery. The Castle of Manfred, with its circle of mediæval towers, we had to imagine. We are taught that a city built upon a hill cannot be hid, but this does not hold good near Castrogiovanni in the rain.

When we at last arrived at the great town gate, no one was about ; one found oneself looking for grass between the stones of the street, but it is not there, the great squares are too well set.

A drier evening hour drew us forth to examine the sullen town, and we walked briskly beneath quaint gateways (for the melancholy wind blows keenly along the narrow streets), standing aside in a doorway when a mule's side burdens filled the way from wall to wall.



CALASCIBETTA, CALLED THE TWIN TOWN OF CASTROGIOVANNI ON THE OPPOSITE HILL

Galip Crupi

Sometimes there was a mere crack between two houses leading to steps, whose top ended in a wall. Doors opened on to sunless ways, and one is sorry to think of children being reared in such grim places, where want of sunshine is added to the evils of malnutrition, for the townsfolk of Castrogiovanni are very poor. It does not seem a cheerful or healthy place.

Cardinal Newman in 1833 stayed here for six weeks and was very ill; he was attended by his faithful Neapolitan servant Generaro. The story is told in Mrs. Mozley's account of her brother's life: "When recovering from the fever, he put his head under the bedclothes to avoid hearing the church bells. The people regarded the old man, soon to be made a Cardinal, as a heretic and a devil tormented by the summons to Christian worship."

Castrogiovanni has thirty-six churches, in some of which are relics which have not always sufficient authority to make it possible for them to be genuine, such as the cooking-stove used by the Virgin at S. Sperito. In S. Chiara there are tile pictures on the floor and also at S. Michele, where there is a picture of S. Michael threatening the devil with a staff.

Many of the churches are up tiny steep pathways where one would never expect to find any large building; or a lane, seeming to be the one leading to a church, becomes a blind alley. The Collegiate Church was founded in 1307, but only the apse and the south door remain of the original building; over the door is a carved relief of S. Martin. S. Francesco has a square Norman tower, with a porch beneath it. A good many of the churches are sadly out of repair.

Climbing the steep road to the Cathedral down came

the rain again, and we were accosted in American by a hospitable native ; the embers in the little scaldino he was holding hissed as he talked. He begged us to " step inside " and shelter in the wide open cottage room, the basso of a mediæval house, and we very gladly did so.

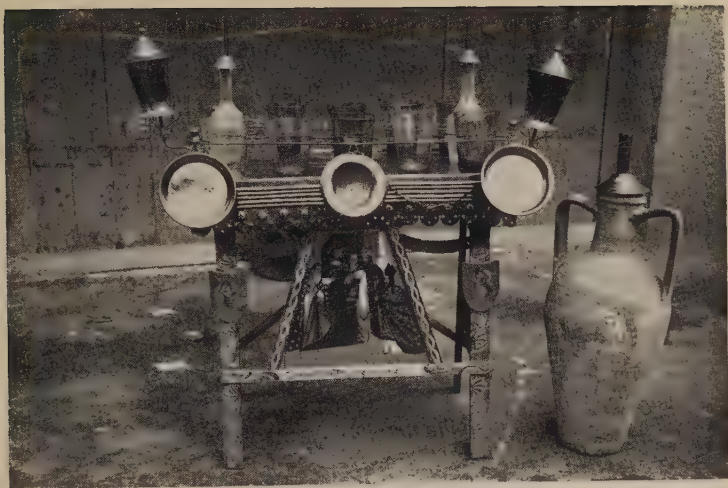
Here was seated a sweet-faced grandmother, whose abundant white hair showed beyond the blue kerchief. The Madre was called to do honour to the guests and hastened from below, where the sleeping and living room led out into a paved yard, in which a palm was visible, and a great oil jar with a tree carnation growing : it would have held two of the forty thieves comfortably.

Three boys from six to twelve enlarged the group, and two little girls, hooded, with their little fringed shawls, had just come in from school.

Happily our supply of sweets, always ready for attractive babies, had lately been renewed, and we were offered a scaldino to hold, a most welcome courtesy ; every member of the family seemed to own one, and grandmother had one beneath her chair as well as the one on her lap.

Giuseppe explained that they are their only means of heating in these great thick-walled, chimneyless houses, so cool in summer and never as cold in winter as the thin newly-built walls of an American shanty, but still cold enough.

Yes, he had been in Baltimore and had learned " to spik the Amerecano," and recently returned to do his eighteen months' military service, perhaps in Rome, in Naples, or Palermo ; he will then get back to America, " for there is nothing to do in Castrogiovanni, where it is so crowded."



BRASS FITTED LEMONADE STALL. PANEL PAINTING. CORONATION OF KING ROGER



PEASANTS' LAUNDRY WORK

E. Melendez

Certainly the town must be thickly populated if all these huddled houses contain a family party of the number before us in each room, which is the rule, our host's owning two rooms being quite exceptional.

Then, the rain past, we took leave of the family, having arranged with the English-speaking Giuseppe that he shall assemble the four custodians holding the four keys necessary to open the Treasury of the Cathedral immediately after Mass the next morning. This he assured us he could do and would himself attend, getting leave from the head barber, where he worked, for a free morning with us. He would also assemble the necessary crowd for the opening of the Museum, for that also is generally shut.

To awake in sunshine is encouraging—rather a cold and attenuated brightness with more light than heat, but at any rate it was fine ; in this past-haunted, rain-haunted spot one must not be too critical. This is an original Sikel town, founded in prehistoric times ; it still endures prehistoric weather.

Mists and clouds have rolled away, and from a shelf of towering rock one sees where Proserpine, the spirit of spring, wandered down the mountain side amongst the flowery meadows to the Lake Pergusa, which then lay calm and beautiful, but is now supposed to be sulphurous as with fumes of hell. With heartless precision, which takes no notice of Proserpine and her adventures nor the "flowers of Tyrean hue," geography tells us Pergusa is an old crater about four miles round, and is now employed for flax-steeping, and is very malarious.

At any rate, the meadows are still lovely with flowers : later we gathered valerian and wild iris, violets, asphodels and wild peonies, blue pimpernels

and anemones purple and red ; and though narcissi with a hundred heads are not for common folk like ourselves, yet Proserpine found one, and as she stretched out her hand to take it the earth opened, " the King of the Great Nation of the Dead sprang out with his immortal horses, seized the unwilling girl and bore her weeping to his golden chariot."

Addison makes use of the incident when he writes in the *Spectator* on the dangers to the Fair Sex of Maying. " Proserpine was out a Maying, when she met with that fatal Adventure to which Milton alludes when he mentions

. . . ' that fair Field
Of Enna, where Proserpine gath'ring flow'rs,
Herself, a fairer flow'r, by gloomy Dis
Was gather'd.' "

Mother Demeter heard the sharp cry and fled over land and sea seeking her daughter ; for nine days she wandered up and down upon the earth, blazing torches in her hands ; and Homer tells much of the wanderings of the grieving mother.

A lovely story, full of symbolism of Mother Earth and Fecundity, and other abstractions. Let us raise our eyes from Pergusa and look at the country, spread out for a hundred miles in great rolling hills, until we see Etna's snow cap in the distance.

Outstanding is that strange monument, indicative of the passing glories of one creed destroyed to make room for the next, the great white rock of Ceres beyond the Castle of Manfred. No pillars or walls remain, for it is probable that every stone was removed by the Christians in order to obliterate, in the minds of the people, the worship of Ceres and Proserpine.

The hewn white rock, cut to receive the temple, stands against its mountain background. Cicero writes of the goddess :

The whole island of Sicily was consecrated to Ceres and Libera. Not only did all other nations think so, but the Sicilians themselves were so convinced of it, that it appeared a deeply rooted and innate belief in their minds. For they believe that these goddesses were born in these districts, and that corn was first discovered in this land, and that Libera was carried off, the same goddess whom they call Proserpine, from a grove in the territory of Enna, a place which, because it is situated in the centre of the island, is called the navel of Sicily.

Castrogiovanni was considered the strongest natural fortress in the world, and though taken and retaken several times, it was always through treachery, not weakness. Eunus, the slave, held it for two years against all the power of Rome, and only lost it by betrayal. It was besieged by the Saracens for thirty-one years before it was taken by a stratagem ; the Normans only got it through treachery.

But we must not linger ; it is time to make our way to the Cathedral, where we may keep our tryst with American-speaking Giuseppe and the Four Custodians. So we climb up-hill streets and down-hill streets, all stone-paved in 15-inch blocks set diamond wise, except in the centre, where alternate squares are of cobble-stones, that the mules may get firmer foothold. The width also is nicely adjusted, that they may pass as well as did the sedan-chairs of the rich in the old days. One sees these chairs, of serviceable leather or pictured in Vernis Martin, mouldering in stable and outhouse. How fantastic

to meet my lady preceded by her torch-man and the bearers of great lanterns with linen sides, stretched on a frame! but, alas! neither my lady nor Proserpine are out this cold March morning, when even the sun shines with diminished warmth; and one wonders how long it takes to dry the strips of orange-peel hanging up in the sun, twisted in and out of the iron lattice windows that we are passing. What a thrifty people! I had seen an orange-seller in the street at Palermo wait beside his customer while the orange was eaten, and receiving back the peel, put it into a corner of his basket. What was he going to do with it? Sell it to marmalade makers or candied peel exporters? Hardly, where the factories buy in enormous quantities the produce of a grove; and here are these cottagers thriftily drying the peel to preserve it themselves for jam or flavouring or medicine or fuel. I never found out: it reminds one of the other orange-peel mystery—Dr. Johnson's orange-peel collections which so intrigued Lady Diana Beauclerk and Boswell that they made a wager on the subject; this is described in vol. ii. of Boswell's "Life of Johnson," the Clarendon Press edition:

I won a small bet from Lady Diana Beauclerk by asking him (Johnson) as to one of his peculiarities, which her Ladyship said I dare not do. It seems he had been frequently observed at the Club to put into his pocket the Seville oranges after he had squeezed the juice of them into the drink which he made for himself.

Beauclerk and Garrick talked of it to me, and seemed to think that he had a strange unwillingness to be discovered. We could not divine what he did with them, and this was the bold question to be put.



CATHEDRAL. SICILIAN GOTHIC. 14TH AND 15TH CENTURY

Galiffi Crupi

I saw on his table the spoils of the preceding night, some fresh peels neatly scraped and cut into pieces.

"Oh, sir," said I, "I now partly see what you do with the squeezed oranges which you put into your pocket at the Club."

JOHNSON: "I have a great love for them."

BOSWELL: "And pray, sir, what do you do with them: you scrape them very neatly, and what next?"

JOHNSON: "Nay, sir, you shall know their fate no further."

Twenty years earlier Johnson had recommended to Miss Boothly, as a remedy for indigestion, dried orange-peel finely powdered, taken in a glass of hot red port. "I would not," he added, "have you offer it to the Doctor as very many Physicians do not love intruders." *Piozzo Letters*, 58th Letter.

So much for mysterious orange-peel.

We pass the great empty tower of La Rocca, built in the fourteenth century by Frederick of Aragon, and now kept locked "to prevent robbers from lying in wait in it." No idle precaution, for the head of the police in Castrogiovanni was shot two days after we left the town. What opportunities for lawlessness in these narrow streets, for scufflings and assassinations and hidings, afterwards vanishing down a 30-inch passage, leading to goodness knows where!

Conspiracies, massacres, and secret poisonings form the warp and woof of Sicily's mediæval history, without going back as far as the secrets hidden by the old grey walls concerning the devilish cruelties of Damophilus and his wife, which caused the first Slave war.

On the ground-floor the palaces are all iron guarded, the windows have lovely grilles of rope-pattern. What of the rooms they guard? Perhaps they are beautiful

with Florentine tapestry or Sicilian brocade hangings, furnished with ebony cabinets inlaid with ivory, Persian rugs and marble sculpture, and, perhaps, they are draped with cobwebs and dust, the home of rats, damp and decay: in Sicily one never knows, the walls hold secrets too grim for telling.

Arrived at the Sacristy, we behold the Four Custodians gloomily awaiting the Priest, who, having doffed his vestments, seized his scaldino, stirred the embers into a glow and led the way through the iron-clamped doors with fifteenth-century carving, after each of the four had sternly inserted his key.

Here one of the finest jewels in the whole of Sicily, whose church treasures are enormously rich, is displayed to us—the crown worn by the black Madonna when each year she is brought down from her place behind the altar and takes that strange journey to the Convent, remaining away from the Cathedral for fifteen days.

The crown is of pure gold, 8 inches high, and though diamonds, sapphires, rubies, and emeralds inset are of great value, the exquisitely chiselled enamelled figures in the medallions which illustrate the life of Christ are still more precious.

A monstrance of gold is a magnificent piece of Renaissance work. Silver sanctuary lamps of great size, incense boats, exquisitely wrought, and silver altar frontals are more fully described in their own chapter and place.

Then we see the personal jewels, which have been given as votive offerings by those recovered from sickness and for those who have been spared after some great danger. Pathetic rings of peasant workmanship, watches and chains by the dozen, superb seed pearl ornaments, enamelled brooches; many

of the ear-rings with pearl-studded sails of galleons, dating from the Armada time and the Spanish occupation of Sicily. In fact, this treasury holds a record of the workmanship of the people's jewels of the Adriatic, which is of very notable value. No wonder these objects are so scarce when this is only one example of the hordes of such things stored in the strong-rooms of the churches.

As our visit draws to a close the sad-faced Four become more cheerful; doubtless they now have reason to hope that I have no automatic pistol concealed behind my notebook and they are relieved, especially when another notebook makes its appearance, which makes a noise like lire. It is sometimes a trying moment to say good-bye to those whom you will probably never see again, but this they lightened for us, by remarking kindly, "*Chiave d'oro apre ogni porta*" (except in heaven), which sent us on our way with something to look forward to.

The Black Madonna of Castrogiovanni was found centuries ago drifting in the sea, and was towed to land by some sailors. The image being put into a cart, the oxen brought it, without guidance, to Castrogiovanni—indeed a miracle, for the town is far inland and is seldom without a cloud resting on its shoulders. The Madonna is kept in a niche behind the altar, and each July she is put on her portable platform, which we saw in the Cathedral, and with the fine brocade *baldacchino* is carried to the neighbouring convent by men dressed as reapers, obviously a throwback to Ceres. There she stays for fifteen days, and the people come from far and near to pay their devotions.

There is a picture, which we presently see in the

Museum, of the Madonna being dragged by the stalwart reapers, and mighty hard work it must be up the steep, narrow streets, for the image is heavy with golden crown and weight of votive offerings. Great candles sway and drip grease along the street, public enthusiasm is at its height.

The story of a sacred image reaching a destination without human guidance is also told concerning the Madonna of Custonaci, near Trapani. There, in classical times, the worship of Venus had taken place in the temple with which her name is associated; there she was worshipped as Aphrodite by the Greeks, and as Astarte or Ashtaroth by the Phœnicians.

Giuseppe Pitrè, in his "*Feste Patronali in Sicilia*," tells how French sailors, with the sacred picture of the Madonna, were returning to Marseilles with other treasures from Egypt, and were overtaken by a terrible storm; they implored the Madonna to help them; there was no response until they were nearing Cofano, when a voice came from the picture indicating that the Madonna wished to be landed on the coast; whereupon they vowed to build a sanctuary if their lives were spared, and the storm immediately ceased.

Returning thanks, the sailors landed and began to build the sanctuary, but were dissuaded by the peasants, who declared that corsairs frequented the harbour and would certainly steal the picture. So it was placed in a cart drawn by two oxen, who refused to go in any but one direction, and having proceeded two or three kilometres lay down, "and could by no means be persuaded to go further." So the sanctuary came to be built at the little village of Custonaci. The recorded date of this occurrence varies from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. The picture is

transported to the mountain in times of calamity, such as pestilence, earthquake, a plague of locusts, war, or the delay of autumn rains.

On May 3 the people of Castrogiovanni, which once was Enna, still go out rejoicing and merry-making to the lake of Pergusa and picnic in the meadows. How many of them know that centuries ago Ceres worship induced the same merry festival in springtime, and the housewives baked cakes and took sun-dried figs, threaded on thin willow stems, just as they are threaded now, and fireworks were let off and balloons and bladders blown out as toys for the little ones, and escaped from hot little hands just in the same way? Joy in springtime is very near the worship of Ceres the Wheatgiver.

CHAPTER IV

SYRACUSE

WE had intended walking through walled lanes, gardens, and lemon groves to some of the ancient places of Syracuse which lie by the sea, a vast plain of the dead, but close to the Villa Politi in the Achradina quarter of the town a persuasive brown-faced Sicilian Jehu, whose horse was decorated with nine red wool tassels and an upright ostrich feather half a yard high, caused our intention to evaporate.

Off we drove with the sea-breeze in our faces, and the busy harbour of Ortygia in the distance, full of absurdly modern steamships instead of menacing triremes; however, one cannot have everything, and nine tassels and an ostrich feather must suffice. Historical background will come later, when the whole country from the Ionian Sea to the hills of Hybla is spread out before us.

On the road we met lithe, dark-eyed country folk who might have been descendants of Theocritean maids and shepherds: dark-skinned, bright-eyed, with languorous glance, trudging in the dust beside wine-laden asses, or seated in their carts painted with paladin pictures or legends of saints or stories from Ariosto.

We soon arrived at the Roman amphitheatre, and had to jerk our thoughts back to the time nineteen

SYRACUSE



ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE, WITH CENTRE TANK FOR CROCODILES. PROBABLY BUILT BY THE EMPEROR AUGUSTUS. IT IS LARGER THAN THOSE AT VERONA POLA OR POMPEII



WILD PAPYRUS GROWING IN THE RIVER ANAPO. ORIGINALLY BROUGHT BY THE EGYPTIAN WIFE OF THE TYRANT AGATHOCLES. 4TH CENTURY B.C.

Galiffi Crupi

centuries ago when, under Augustus, Syracuse was repopulated by a Roman colony. How else could there be this amphitheatre, for the Greeks were unacquainted with such barbarous amusements as combats between gladiators and animals ?

It was interesting to note, as we went in, that there were the usual four doors. Had they their equivalent of a county council to regulate their entrances and exits ? The place is complete with a centre tank, where the crocodiles were kept, gorged with the bodies of Christians and others, after the wild beasts had finished with them. It is a huge enclosure, larger than the amphitheatre at Verona or Pompeii.

Charles V had, of course, used it as a quarry when he wanted to do some of his own building, but it is in a fair state of preservation and a marvellous relic. It was excavated by the Duke of Serradifalco in 1840. We did not trouble about the underground passages communicating with the beasts' dens, notwithstanding the guide's persuasions ; the sunshine was more attractive, and wild mignonette was to be found growing between some of the best seats. This gives a useful hint for the improvement of our London theatres : sow mignonette between the stalls and we get more room for hats. I present the idea to the managers.

How different in association is the splendid theatre of the beauty-loving Greeks that we next visited. The auditorium is not built, but hewn out of the living rock on the natural slope of the hill Neapolis, and is probably contemporary with the first stone theatre of Greece. There are forty-six rows of seats ; the top tier is two hundred and fifty yards round ; there are nine sections, and eight wide staircases

give access for the audience. Experts do not agree as to whether there were higher rows of seats, which have been destroyed. Two corridors lead from the stage to the orchestra. All the seats were free ; they are still free, but only little green lizards occupied them on that hot March morning, and we gazed overwhelmed with the size and splendour, and imagined the vast throng tramping the highways leading to this place ; the chariots of the rich citizens, with their slave attendants, made wheel ruts which are still deep in the marble road, and they measure exactly the span of the carrettas of the present day.

In those far-off days a Greek theatre was parliament house as well as a centre of culture, and when great deeds were hymned by Greek poets, the words, beautiful in themselves, must have been enhanced a hundred-fold by the surroundings.

Both harbour and sea lie stretched out as drop-scene on this mighty stage. The rocks of Taormina, the mountains of Hybla, and the snowy summit of Etna are also visible as we turn. Of the city itself there are now few relics left, but when Syracuse was at its zenith—mighty Syracuse, the most opulent and powerful of all the Grecian cities—temples, gymnasia, and other sumptuous buildings must have made a striking feature in the middle distance.

The tyranny of memory brings scenes to the mind, pale and dim, but persistent ; vague and shadowy forms gliding in procession along the highway, flitting amongst the marble seats and then vanishing ; ghost forms blending with one another, pausing as if listening to blind Timoleon's voice, bending forward to catch the golden words of Pindar ; a slave hurrying with another silken cushion for his master's seat. Then,

when all the audience like wraiths have filed in, comes Dionysius the tyrant, with his train, wearing his beard with burnt ends, for he will not be shaved for fear of razors, and underneath his festal flowing robes he wears defensive armour. His two young wives are with him, Doris and Aristomache, married on the same day, and a silent court stands obsequiously and uneasy until the great man is seated.

The play is the "Agamemnon," a tragedy, and only the very young and light-hearted must have been free from the feeling that tragedy was always near.

Most impressive of all is that scene in the theatre, given, unrehearsed, when the setting was not on the marble stage, but on the sea beyond, and the audience had amongst it none of fighting age. It was the old men and the women of Syracuse who sat in these seats to witness the last great sea-fight against the Athenians.

They had full view of the bay and the city on the island of Ortygia, and when the curtain was rung down that day the play of Athenian glory in Sicily was done.

The visions pass, there is nothing left but stubborn blocks of marble, ruined steps, fallen buildings, broken tombs, empty long ago.

A stern, tremendous place this Greek theatre; the scene, set so often for tragedy, is empty now: the actors are all dust. The solitude of a spot where a mighty race has left footprints is doubly noticeable. Something glitters on the path; we stoop, thinking to find fragments of the broken hour-glass of Time himself; the sands run out, but sunshine has played a trick: it is dust that glitters—Dust of Ages.

There is a sound of cow-bells, and the fainter, thinner note which tells that the belled leader of a herd of goats is near; through the great aqueduct there is the

rush of water, continuous yet illusive—one must listen intently to hear it at all; the warm hum of bees, as they seek nectar from the mountain flowers to make Hyblian honey: these sounds now take the place of the shouting crowds, the rumbling chariot wheels, the thud of horses' hoofs on marble roads of former days.

The Strada dei Sepolcri, or Street of Tombs, leads from the Greek theatre to the little hill where the Temple of Apollo stood; the statue of the god was so large that even the robber Verres was unable to remove it. Here are hundreds of square openings, where tablets once commemorated the names and attributes of the dead.

They have long since been taken to the safe keeping of museums, or removed by private individuals whose possessory instinct made them imitate the example set by Verres, Charles V, and other high-placed thieves.

Descending the street, where the rock is full of the dark mouths of open tombs running back into the earth, we reach the Latomia del Paradiso, a great limestone quarry, looking as grim as its history, though the deep twenty-acre square pit, with a single pillar of rock unquarried, is now grown over with lemon-trees, olive, and a tangle of ivy and bougainvilleas. There is a garden at the bottom, and a child gave me violets—a welcome incident in this morning of gory recollections.

A winding labyrinth at one side of the limestone cliff possesses strange acoustic properties—in fact, it is a kind of ancient megaphone. A whisper comes back magnified a hundred times, a shout is deafening, a sigh echoes away and away as if the spirits of the dead and tortured were once more vocal, and their groans of anguish were answering the sounds our light-hearted experiments called forth.

SYRACUSE



EAR OF DIONYSIUS, LATOMIA DEL PARADISO



ROPE WALK IN LATOMIA



GREEK THEATRE WHICH HELD 24,000 PEOPLE



STREET OF TOMBS WITH GREEK CHARIOT RUTS

Caravaggio aptly called the place the Ear of Dionysius when he visited it in the seventeenth century. Addison describes the scene in the *Spectator*, No. 439 :

Dionysius the Tyrant of Sicily had a dungeon which was a very curious piece of architecture : and of which, as I am informed, there are still to be seen some remains in that Island. It was called Dionysius' Ear and built with several little windings and labyrinths in the form of a real ear. The structure of it made it a kind of whispering place, but such a one as gathered the voice of him who spoke into a funnel which was placed at the very top of it. The Tyrant used to lodge all his State-Criminals or those whom he supposed to be engaged together in any evil designs upon him in this dungeon. He had at the same time an apartment over it, where he used to apply himself to the funnel and by that means overheard everything that was whispered in the dungeon. I believe one may venture to affirm that a Cæsar or an Alexander would rather have died by the Treason than have used so disingenuous means for the detecting of it.

Our much-decorated steed took us on to the Altar of Hecatombs, where 450 oxen were sacrificed every year to Jupiter, and also to celebrate the expulsion of Thrasybulus. There are stone runnels here to drain away the blood, a necessary and hygienic convenience.

Then on to another exhilarating sight, the most extensive catacombs in the world, those of S. Giovanni. They are not very deep, and daylight penetrates down shafts here and there and enables us to see numberless empty and yawning tombs, hewn in the solid rock, while small shelves between, just large enough for a baby, but a tight fit, are cut in rows.

Whole generations of the dead must have lain

together, some in stone coffins, some without. Occasionally large squares appear in the passages and intersecting streets, making open spaces, and we are told these pathways, bordered with tombs, extend for eight miles.

We were offered the chance of seeing seven other groups of tombs or necropolis in other parts of the town, but denied ourselves any more of these treats, for the Latomia of the Cappuccini is still before us, "The Gethsemane of a nation."

The extent of these great burial places makes one ponder on the size of mighty Syracuse. Cicero, one of the two Roman Quæstors of Sicily, 75 B.C., spent months in Sicily collecting evidence for his impeachment of "the man Verres" who, in his capacity of tyrant, had stolen untold treasures and works of art from the various towns. It is from this impeachment that so much is to be learnt about Sicily's great wealth and the beauty of her possessions. He describes the town of Syracuse as

the largest of Greek cities, and the most beautiful of all capitals. For it is both strong of natural position, and striking to behold, from whichever side it is approached, whether by land or sea. So vast is Syracuse that it may be said to consist of four very large cities.

Lest we should be daunted by a city consisting of four cities, each with its own name and history, let us hasten to add that even the ruins of these cities, with the exception of Ortygia, have totally disappeared. Even as children's names scratched in the sand are washed and ironed from the seashore by a single great tide, so have most of the great buildings of Syracuse been flattened and obliterated completely; the work of countless thousands gone.

We visited the little subterranean church underneath S. Giovanni, where legend tells that S. Paul preached. S. Marziano is one of the oldest churches in Christendom, only two being older, one in Egypt and the other at Antioch, the next church in order of antiquity being S. Pancrazio at Taormina, which we are to see later.

The apse of S. Marziano is said to date from the fourth century, and the episcopal chair of the saint crumbles in a corner. A column is pointed out to which S. Marcian was bound when martyred. A holy place, very full of primitive beauty and simplicity.

Up again into the sunshine, we next see the *Latomia dei Cappuccini*, after dismissing our gay little horse with many regrets, for he has certainly lightened the effect of gloomy scenes. "The Gethsemane of a nation" this *Latomia* has been called; it is in the garden of the Villa Politi, in Achradina, under the Cappuccini convent, and is by far the largest and most important of all these mighty stone quarries.

Written of by Thucydides, four hundred years before Christ, as then being so ancient that its origin is forgotten :

It is cut out of rock, excavated to a marvellous depth, and carved out by the labour of great multitudes of men. Nothing can be either made or imagined so closed against all escape, so hedged in on all sides, so safe for keeping prisoners in. Into these quarries men are commanded to be brought, even from other cities in Sicily, if they are commanded by the public authorities to be kept in custody.

And in this Gethsemane 7,000 freemen of the proudest city of Greece were brought by an unexampled stroke of misfortune to slavery and a miserable end.

Here they dwindled away, worn out by wounds, disease, thirst, hunger, heat by day, cold by night, heart sickness, and the insufferable stench of putrefying corpses. The pupils of Socrates, the admirers of Euripides, the orators and the athletes of the Lyceum, comrades and philosophers died here, a hideous martyrdom.

The air is heavy with recollection as we look down the sheer cliffs of limestone, standing where the Syracusans stood when they came in chariot or dainty horse-drawn litter, and the ladies held the queer-shaped parasols that one sees on painted vases, and, leaning over, taunted the dying captives.

A grim morning truly in Sicily's bright sunshine.

"At the extremity of the island is the fountain of Arethusa, of incredible size and abounding with fish, which would be entirely covered by the sea were it not protected by a massive wall." The sacrificial goats and deer of Diana were herded on the grasslands at the water's edge, beside the Fountain of Arethusa. And here the fountain is still imprisoned, as Cicero says above, with stout masonry. One loves to think of Arethusa and her wild beauty, but the "stout masonry" strikes a note of incongruity.

During the sentimental pilgrimage to the Lover's Fountain, a beloved but prosaic companion longed for rod and line to tempt those historic grey mullet, such is the iconoclastic spirit of the sportsman. Nelson made use of the Arethusa well by watering his fleet at her fountain, and there is a letter extant addressed to the Hamiltons which records the fact.

July 22, 1798.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—Thanks to your exertions we have victualled and watered, and surely watering at

the Fountain of Arethusa we must have victory. We shall sail with the first breeze, and be assured I will return either crowned with laurel or covered with cypress.

Joseph Farington writes in his Diary, under the date February 2, 1800: "The Neapolitans as well as Sicilians have the highest opinion and respect for the English. Nothing could exceed their rejoicing on the news of the victory of Lord Nelson."

It seems that only mighty factors disturb this pool. Soon after Nelson's visit the result of an earthquake made the waters salt, but that had no effect on the grey mullet, for they are still there in shoals.

In the Middle Ages devout embellishment was added to the Arethusa legend, and it was asserted that the fountain had a submarine and miraculous communication with the River Jordan. Here is the original story told by Pausanias, vol. vii, 2 :

Alphæus a huntsman loved Arethusa, a huntress maid, but she, they say, not choosing to wed, crossed over to the isle that fronts Syracuse, by name Ortygia. And there she was changed from a woman into a spring of water, and Alphæus, too, turned into a river all for love.

Shelley says of the Lovers :

At noontide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of asphodel ;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore,
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more.

The perfect features of the lovely Arethusa have come down to us on what are considered by experts to be the finest coins in the world, engraved by Evaenetus and Cimon, for the great Sicilian coins of old times bear the name of the engraver, so that connoisseurs are often more sure of the masterpieces of coin engravers than of the names of the great sculptors.

Struck by the Syracusans after their conquest of the Athenians, 413 B.C., they bear on one side the glorious head of the Maid in high relief, and on the reverse a galloping four-horse chariot. There is a kind of predella under the main design, where are represented the arms borne by the Athenian hoplites. This shows that these great decadrachms are trophy coins.

The Museum at Syracuse, opposite the Cathedral, in the great Square, is very well kept and arranged, and, for a Sicilian museum, fairly labelled. Its chief gem is the world-famous Landolina Venus, found in 1804 by Cav. Landolina, the founder of the Museum, in the garden of the Villa Landolina, which was then called the Giardino Bonavia.

Poor Venus, the wonder of Syracuse, was discovered headless, with mutilated right arm. She is in the act of rising from her bath : her left hand holds drapery round her body, the right covers her breast. What is her story ? Was she buried in order to save her from the covetous eyes of Verres ? Were the remains secreted in the temple garden and the breakage a result of interment, or was the lovely statue mutilated by profane hands ? Where is the head ? Perhaps destroyed, or perhaps, prosaic suggestion, were the excavators of the early nineteenth century less careful and thorough, and the head, whose beauty we can only

imagine from the perfection of the figure, may yet some day be found ?

In the Museum also the collection of ancient Greek sarcophagi is remarkable ; some have their contents undisturbed. A terra-cotta sarcophagus, amongst hundreds of others, is interesting as containing the toys of a child and an image of Diana, for maidens offered up their toys of past childhood to Diana in her grove at Syracuse ; quantities of Greek heads of statuettes are beautifully arranged, besides the earlier Sikelian and Sicanian pottery. The sets of ancient coins of Syracuse are practically complete up to the point which present discovery has reached.

Syracuse has a wonderful Cathedral, for worship has gone on in it continuously for 2,500 years. The temple, which is literally embedded in the walls, had been used for the worship of Minerva a hundred years before the Parthenon was built. The columns inside have hardly a chip ; its cella, which has been cut into piers and arches by the Cathedral makers, was once decorated with the paintings of Zeuxis. Its doors of ivory and gold, plundered by Verres, were the wonder of the world.

It was built in the sixth century before Christ, and the old gods were worshipped there till 600 years after Christ, when Bishop Zoisemus seized and adapted its framework to his uses, so that the old columns stick out of its sides like the ribs of a skeleton.

S. Lucia is the patron saint of Syracuse ; her church S. Lucia at Borgo is Norman and has a handsome campanile. She was born in the city in 304, of Christian parents, who themselves suffered martyrdom under Diocletian. The scene of the saint's martyrdom is where the church now stands, and this virgin saint

undoubtedly took the place of the virgin goddess Diana in the minds of the Syracusians.

The great Harbour of Syracuse is very deep; the entrance three-quarters of a mile wide, between the Castles of Maniace and Plemmyrium; the river Anapo runs into it opposite to the city, and a visit to the second famous fountain of Syracuse is a matter entailing a delightful river trip up the so-called Anapo, which is bordered by the long-stemmed, mop-headed papyrus, planted, so tradition says, by the Egyptian wife of the "strong, beautiful, extravagant and immoral tyrant Agathocles."

The plants grow 10 feet high in this, the only spot in Europe where they are wild, and the moplike crests of bunches of green filaments hang like fine hair and are called the *Perrucca* by the Sicilians. It is the tender fibres of the stalk which were first used by the Egyptians for writing-boards; the process of cutting the fibre into thin slices and pressing them together is very simple, and one can buy sections of modern manufacture at the Museum and other places in the town.

The stream is short and ends in the 30-foot pool, funnel-shaped, and of a lovely blue colour; this "azure cup" is Cyane's fountain. She was a nymph of Proserpine, and when Pluto struck the earth with his trident, so that he could sink with his chariot and four black horses and carry off Proserpine to be his queen in hell, Cyane wept so copiously that she filled the cleft with her tears and herself dissolved into a fountain.

Higher up is the historical gorge of Spampinato, where the Athenians tried to escape after their final naval defeat in the harbour. Why is it that water-

SYRACUSE



CATHEDRAL IN WHICH THE TEMPLE OF MINERVA OR DIANA IS EMBEDDED. BUILT 100 YEARS BEFORE THE PARTHENON, WORSHIP HAS BEEN HELD WITHIN ITS WALLS FOR OVER 2,500 YEARS

Galiff Crupi

ways seem to hold, crystallized and fresh, the old stories of love or war even more perfectly than outline of hills and crumbling temples?

From the banks of the Cyane can be seen the two remaining columns of the Temple of Olympian Zeus, and the Doric strong-room, namely the pit, lined with masonry, which is said to have been the treasury of the temple. The bronze planisphere which marked the seasons, months, days, hours and movements of the planets was kept here, also the register of the names of all the citizens of Syracuse. Its chief treasure was its figure of the god to which Gelo presented a gold mantle. Dionysius stole this, saying it was "too heavy in summer and too cold in winter," and Verres stole the statue, a very characteristic end for anything valuable in Syracuse in those days.

Euryalus, in the quarter of Syracuse called Epipolæ, "because it lieth higher than the rest," is the great fortress which has been called the Greek Carcassonne. It is the best preserved Greek fortress in Europe and was probably built by Dionysius, in order to guard communications with the interior of the Island in case of siege.

It occupies an area of 15,000 square metres, one-third of this space being occupied by great ditches and subterranean galleries leading to them. These galleries, which are still dry and in fair order, are 9 to 10 feet wide and 8 feet high, and sometimes they turn at right angles so as to avoid going beneath and thus weakening the great towers; these were for the catapults which were invented by the engineers 300 years before Christ. The towers are now veiled with feathery grasses, and nothing more fierce is to be seen than the snapdragons which grow on the walls.

Enormous gateways, now ruinous, are pathetically closed by Sicilian padlocks, spaces once spanned by drawbridges are knee deep in lupin and asphodel. There are vaults for provisions and ammunition, with notes graven on the wall as to quantities. Passages are hewn out of solid rock, where men employed in the open court might retreat under cover.

Such passages are circuitous so as to be easily blocked. There are underground stables where rings still hang for fastening the bridles of horses of three hundred years before Christ. There is a range of openings, through which Grecian arrows sped, and sally-ports, one high for a mounted soldier, one low for a foot soldier, both openings askew so as to deceive a watcher from afar.

There are niches for the sentinels, secret passages, massive flights of steps, underground chambers, and nature provides steep places down which armed men were hurled, when there was that night attack by Athenians.

If ever there was a place where one visualizes the flesh and blood Greek soldier it is at the great fortress of Euryalus, every minutest detail in Greek military life seems to be laid bare, and the five great towers of unmortared masonry dominate the stupendous works.

Six miles away, over the almost bare plain which once was Tyche, lies the shrunken modern town of Syracuse, the Island of Ortygia and the Sea. Once there were vast buildings, temples, gymnasia, a terraced town where now stretch fields, green and fertile; vetch and marigold blossom on the fortress slope; fallen stones are half hidden by mauve anemone and oxalis. On the right is a field of the cloth

of golden buttercups, reaching the great wall, which blossoms with alyssum between its blocks.

There is a tuft of bamboo, the marked precision of its stem in delightful contrast to the inconsequent gaiety of quivering foliage. So we leave those stern broken ramparts, lying in mellow ruin in the midst of a pageant of spring flowers, but it is unforgettable that once they guarded age-furrowed, passion-scarred Syracuse.

CHAPTER V

TAORMINA

ONE is haunted at Taormina with the feeling that it is all "too good to be true." Is it possible that Nature could have arranged that there should be the lovely snow mountain above all, the four hills overlooking the town—Monte Croce, castle-crowned Mola, Taormina's citadel, Monte Ziretto, and great Monte Veneretta—the middle distance in harmonious curves with old buildings in suitable setting; the near foreground wooded and full of song-birds, and the Strait of Messina below, with the great rocks Andrea and Isola Bella in the right place to give value to the whole?

The most perfect view of the town is from the sea, for the old Tauromenium is set in a frame unmatched for beauty. So must Timoleon surely have thought, when he landed in the little bay to deliver Sicily from her tyrants. That abrupt hill, rising nearly 400 feet above Giardini, the rocky height further on, where in his day was the Acropolis. How warmly the inhabitants welcomed him! and all went well with them until his death. Then what foolish councils induced Tauromenians to join with Carthaginians against the great Agathocles. No wonder they were chastised for their foolishness, and it was not until the town came into the possession of the Romans that they enjoyed a long and peaceful period.

Of course the Romans built themselves baths, as they did everywhere—the Naumachia ; there is little of it left now, simply two large roofed-in cisterns and a wall of Roman brickwork. The Stagnoni, on the hill above the Messina gate, are the great cisterns which not only supplied the Naumachia with water, but also the town. Further up the hill, a steep climb of 2,000 feet, is the tiny town of Mola, Taormina's citadel and the key to the town. Dionysius surprised it on a winter's night, and it played an important part in the sieges by the Saracens in A.D. 902 and the Spaniards in the seventeenth century.

On the first night of the full moon nearest to S. George's Day, a festa procession starts from Taormina and proceeds up the steep path ; bands blare and censers swing, and a very picturesque ceremony takes place in Mola's little church, only to be reached in safety at night when the moon is at the full.

Of the Palaces of Taormina the Palazzo Corvaia is the most interesting, with its beautiful shafted Gothic windows, with inlays of black lava ; the wall is finished with the forked battlements, *merluzzi*, which makes one think of Saracen building. It has many inscriptions inlaid, one of which is thought to indicate that it was built by the Kings of Aragon. In the courtyard is a quaint relief of the fourteenth century representing Adam and Eve. In the great rooms are frescoes of the fourteenth century ; they are reached by a fine outside staircase, one of the finest in Sicily. In the oak-panelled hall, a general parliament was held in 1410, called together by Bernardo da Cabrera, which elected to the Kingship of Sicily, Bernardo da Cabrera ! However, two years later the jealous Barons called in

the Castilians and deposed the too busy parliament and king-maker.

The Palazzo Ciampoli stands on the top of a broad flight of steps, dating back to the fourteenth century, though its Renaissance arcade and doorway are later additions. The Palazzo S. Stefano is a very beautiful fragment, with its black lava decoration. The central column which supports the crypt is Greek, its capital is later: the conduit which flows through this chamber is a curious feature. The Badia Vecchia is a very handsome Gothic building, once a convent, hence its name, but now only a shell; there are three fine windows; the arches are supported by clustered columns, the spandrels filled with black and white chequer work. This building is terribly built up, but it is still possible to obtain the full effect of its beauty.

The most important building in Taormina is the Græco-Roman theatre, on a height above the main street, which is lined with mostly small dark shops. There are a few larger ones: these are open for part of the year only, when there are visitors in the town.

The theatre is of Greek origin and was probably built about 358 B.C., but in its present form it dates from the Roman period, when the stage was entirely reconstructed and some of the Greek building was removed to make room for the Roman Vestibule. As the seats were not hewn in the rock they, together with many marble ornaments, have been removed by Duca di S. Stefano and others. The green slope of the auditorium gives an idea of its great size, suitable when the town had 100,000 inhabitants, for the theatre holds 40,000. Immense halls stand on each side of the stage, and smaller apartments, which were probably used as dressing-rooms. There is extraordinary charm in the

TAORMINA



BADIA VECCHIA SHOWING CHEQUER WORK
IN BLACK LAVA BETWEEN THE ARCHES



MARBLE MADONNA AND CHILD BY
GAGNINI



FAÇADE OF THE CATHEDRAL, AND FOUNTAIN OF THE ANIMALS

Galif Crupi

rose red of the Roman brick, the lofty pillars on the stage, and the magnificent view at the back, one of the most beautiful in the world. Etna, a pyramid of snow against the sky, the mountains of Castiglione, the peak of Lapa, Mount Ziretto with its marble quarries, and in the foreground the Valley of Alcantara, with Naxos as the point of the horn of the bay, that name so full of deep meaning for the Island, for here Sicily's legends became the History of the Greeks.

Occasionally music is to be heard in the old theatre ; no special preparations are made, and only a few know of the day and time. It was not until sunset had faded and single stars appeared that we heard there would be a " concert " that night, when the full moon would give enough light to tread with safety the spacious broken stairways.

The outlines of great arches and standing pillars were clear cut against a velvet sky, star-studded, and the moon threw patches of silver and patterned the stage and auditorium alike with bright light and densely black shadows, where a fallen column lay. Westward against the stars we could see, almost as bright as day, snow-capped Etna, ringed with the mystery of lower hills ; then in terraced irregularity the houses of Taormina, spangled with drops of light, while the whole outline of the shore showed a crown of sparkling gems fit for a mermaid's wedding wreath.

As we climbed the slope within the precincts all sound was hushed, and the opening jug-jug of a nightingale, succeeded by its trill, made overture : " The nightingale drove straight and full their long clear call." There was no other music, no audience was visible, we seemed alone in the great space ; only a mist of dim yellow lantern light on the broken

stage showed us outline of strange figures, bent over instruments.

Presently came faint vibration, scarcely audible, and we held our breath to listen. To the Greeks music was not noise, and we caught sounds that shepherds first made with reeds on the mountain sides. In rhythmic music the Greeks heard the voice of gods, the sound of trees, the rustling of the wind in olive branches, the moan of sea or splash of brooks, and song of birds : these were caught up into the air, mingled and returned in harmony.

It ceased, and the cheerful sound of clapping came from every part of the great ruin, telling us that indeed we were not alone ; the living audience was unseen, in velvet shadows, and one felt that the faint echo of applause, clear, resilient, up above the highest circling columns, climbing to the limestone crags, might be the spirit echo of those 40,000 souls who, centuries ago, had come as audience and now revisited the place. Silence again, the last echo drained away in the shadows. Then we heard the thin aria of pastorals, such as they still sing at Christmas here, because tradition has it that this was the music of the shepherds as they watched their flocks.

Another theme came very sweet and low, and presently a voice joined and amplified the melody, with no effort or bravura, simply a few tenor notes now and then, as from one of a group of shepherds, who almost unconsciously joined in what he knew and loved well, making the praise vocal.

Some plain-song chants of the thirteenth century followed ; the musicians peered at their script in the dim light, and one felt that they must surely have before them wide-margined vellum pages, beautified with gold

and blue and vermillion, with the square-shaped notes that the monks wrote down.

We stumbled from the theatre into the unshaded silver moonlight, and fellow-listeners materialized out of the dark of fallen columns.

We had experienced something of beauty, achieved with Doric simplicity, without seeming effort, without advertisement, but through knowledge, sincerity, and artistry alone a chaste perfection had been attained.

There is beauty below the town as well as above, and the pathway, 900 feet of rocky ground, with here and there a levelling slab of limestone, is bordered by flowers as lovely as those growing in the meadows of Botticelli's *Primavera*: daisies white and small, daisies larger than any English grown, each petal rose-tipped, daisies tall and stately, the marguerites of our hay-fields, golden pyrethrum, blazing like the sun, outshone only by buttercups' glossy surface, feathery fennel with its great spike of flower 5 feet in height, poppies flaunting their red caps, savouring of glorious Liberty the world over: it is a wonder that Maniscalco did not have them shot down before Garibaldi came.

Tiny pimpernel, blue as the sea, that I have never seen out of Sicily: it has not the nice eye-shutting-before-rain propensity of our English red. Blue-grey wild iris, a lovely thing, stubborn rest-harrow, with pink and white blossoms.

The list is already too long, though barely begun. Here is a bare-footed sailor lad with bright red corals, still dripping wet, in his basket of weed, fresh from some rocky cave; these sea-flowers rival the land flowers in beauty. He has been with his father to the great bamboo lobster pots, and another lad bends

under a load of great spiny langouste, which are much sought after by the hotel keepers.

We admire the sea treasures and wander on, reaching at last the sandy and rocky beach.

Isola Bella's lovely pile is on the right; on our left is the huge bulk of the crags of S. Andrea, which had seemed small from the great height above, from which it had obviously fallen at some prehistoric upheaval, but now we see it a vast mass, with pasture land and the Church of S. Andrea, half ruinous.

Brown-faced, bare-legged men were mending their nets and lobster pots, groups stood waiting to take the *forestieri* to the Blue Grotto. Gaily painted *barcas* were drawn up on the beach, and we selected one with a bright blue prow like a Roman trireme, pink seats, yellow, orange and red outside decorations.

The sea sparkled in the bright morning light, not a breath of wind stirred; Etna's smoke rose almost straight into a whitish sky, and not till it was high up was it caught by a current and carried sideways.

The stones and sand on the beach were white in the glare; as we looked back, the land and the hills were grey, the whole scene might have been painted in grisaille.

We were making way slowly against the current round the great S. Andrea cliff and, fathoms below, one could see the shiny, pearly bottom, just as one does at Sark, for the water is crystal clear.

A few clever turns of the strong wrist and our boatmen headed for a yawning opening in the limestone pile. Now we were broadside on, a ticklish moment, but one evidently quite without terror for our guide; slowly he steered us beneath the overhanging rocks and we shot ahead, then lay awash in the Blue Grotto.

TAORMINA



CAPE S. ANDREA AND ISOLA BELLO



STAGE OF THE GRÆCO ROMAN THEATRE

There was a blue mist, reflections of blue from the water, here close to the rock, in shadow, a deep indigo or lapis lazuli; the lapping cadence against the side was now and then punctuated with a splash. Beyond, the water was shifting and rolling into sapphire and turquoise, where a submerged rock made swirling rings that only a tourmaline would rival in colour.

It is the names of precious stones alone which are adequate to describe those blues. Cerulean sky, the beauty of Montana sapphire, the deep loveliness of Brazilian stones, and over all the tender blue of mountains in twilight.

Reluctantly we gave the order to return, and were steered away from the fluent azure, and found the entrance walls of rock gemmed with bright red coral, marking the water line; then I knew where the sailor boy had found his spoil.

A car with Yankee-speaking Sicilian chauffeur took us along the coast, past the Bronte Garden perilously overhanging the road, towards Naxos on the eastern point of Taormina's Bay, now a forsaken spot. There, had been the beginning of Greek history in Sicily and also its end, for the tyrant Dionysius swept down on the colonists in 403 B.C. and wiped them out. For twenty-two centuries it has been practically uninhabited, mighty in name only.

Half-way to the point lies Giardini, described in guide-books of twenty years ago as "a filthy and malarious hole, uninhabited except by savages who molest the few strangers who pass through its insanitary streets, and possesses no features of interest except a bank of potter's clay."

Now the electrically-lighted and clean-swept streets present the usual aspect of a busy Sicilian suburb,

for there is a flourishing industry which has brought prosperity.

A great lemon factory, one of the many on this side of Sicily, employs hundreds of men, women, and children, who all take part in the conversion of those mountainous piles of golden fruit into various good things and important chemical ingredients for dyeing processes, which are exported.

The perfume of the fruit, like all the hot lemonade in the world, warns us of what we are approaching long before we see the building.

In the great open space at the back are hundreds of enormous barrels, in which the clean halves of orange or lemon rind are tipped, and women arrange the sections in close-packed circles with incredible swiftness as they fall. Brine is added, and this rind is sent abroad for conversion into candied peel.

In a long building, where the workers sing a chanty in unison, some girls are slicing lemons; they seize two from a pile, slice and throw the four halves into a pail which, when filled, is carried by boys to a bench where a hundred men and women stoop, sponge in hand, to scrape the essential oil from the skin for citric acid: three turns of the wrist, pressure on another sponge below, and a pail catches the precious drops.

The lemon halves are flung into a trough where, with a special instrument, the fruit is gutted in one movement, clean as a whistle, and the skin is ready for packing in the yard below.

The pulp is taken to the presses, and the pure juice strained and bottled for various lemonade firms. The refuse, squeezed dry as chips, makes valuable cattle-fattening food, and even the pips are given to the pigs.

As we leave, a dray, gaily painted, has arrived laden with sacks of fruit from a lemon-grove whence they started at daybreak. The men unyoked the great mild-eyed oxen, cream-coloured, with horns a yard long, baskets of split bamboo are piled with lemon-waste for their midday feed, and the work-girls in their bright-coloured kerchiefs wave to us as we drive away.

The lemon trees of Sicily bear three crops a year, so that the factory is always working at full time, and a thousand lemons on each tree will be an average yield. The employment of women in the factories has done much to break the habit, inherited from Saracen ancestors, of the women keeping always in the house. At times of mourning, however, the old rule is persisted in. Daughters, after the death of a parent, are not supposed to go beyond their threshold for a year.

We wind up the steep hill to Taormina, through the Messina gate; here are groups of the Carabinieri round the door of the barracks, which once was the monastic building of the Badia Nuova. They watch the women at the fountain, on the Piazza Margherita, and old men sit in the sun with their backs against the modern theatre of the Regina Margherita, which was once the convent chapel. It is blazing hot; we wander into the cool green shade of the Timeo Garden.

Lounging on a stone seat on one of the terraces and inhaling the perfume of lilies and heliotrope growing in profusion and scenting the hot afternoon air, the sea murmurs faintly and Isola Bella has white surf at her feet; only a bullfinch pipes close to one of the cypress trees. There is a whirr of pigeons where the

gardeners are digging and the persistent note of cuckoo ; the other birds are silent in the heat.

Nowhere in Sicily are song-birds so numerous as up by the Greek Theatre, for many years ago there was garden undergrowth left uncut, specially for a bird sanctuary.

There are other sounds on that April afternoon as one listens lazily. Sightseeing is over for the day ; it is too hot to be strenuous ; someone is chopping wood in a distant olive grove, it is pruning time ; a hammer rings on an anvil up by the Messina gate, one of those delicate flowers with widespread petals is being fashioned by a master blacksmith ; there is the soft insistent tinkle of carretta-bells.

Then the thin drone-note of the Sicilian bagpipes sounds in the lower town ; the tune is probably one of the native tarantellas, which have never been written down but are handed on by the players from father to son. If he has not the elaborate " Cornusa " a shepherd boy or goatherd will make himself a reed pipe, like Pan's, and will carve a figure on it of a Madonna or his own patron saint.

Will a musician ever write down this folk music before it is forgotten, as Professor Giuseppe Pitre wrote the old Sicilian folk verses and folklore which has so much of Greek thought and custom enshrined in it, and reminds us in every line of Theocritus' wood nymphs and shepherd boys ?

It is at Christmas-time that the bagpipe man is in his glory ; he trudges the streets nine days before, and plays a pasturale before each church, where the presepe figures are set out, in Nativity groups ; at this time he reaps a good harvest of lire, and food is given to him.

Possibly the Cornusa man has special duties at

Eastertide—or will the music here be more elaborate ? We shall see—to-morrow will be Palm Sunday.

The churches were crowded. The Duomo near the Catania gate with its outside staircase ; S. Agnese, where the tiny Greek theatre is at the back ; the new Addolorata ; S. Pancrazio, venerable with its association with the old Temple of Apollo ; S. Domenico, cut off now from its convent ; S. Francesco di Paola, up behind the hospital ; and the far away SS. Pietro e Paolo on the Giardini road, all were attended by men, women, and children, including always the latest baby, held up to see the “ pretty lights ” on the altar. Palm branches, yellow and green, were carried by everyone, the dried yellow ones, such as we have in England, are braided and plaited and knotted in patterns, as intricate as those of a piece of *punto a groppo* ; some are tied with ribbons scarlet and blue. The palms are blessed and the owners bear them triumphantly away amid a cloud of incense. The priests visit different altars and give palms to any who have not got them. The children are delighted, and one thinks how willingly, nineteen hundred years ago, the little ones sang Hosanna and strewed them in the way.

On the afternoon of Maundy Thursday, from San Pancrazio came a life-size figure of the Holy Mother borne by six stalwart men in monks' habits, willow crowned ; a sword pierced her heart, on her knees lay a figure of Christ, thorn crowned and bleeding, candles blazed, tall white and purple iris half hid the figures, country posies and wild flowers lay at the Madonna's feet.

In front walked girls in purple capes, their heads covered with white cloths and bound with fillets of thorn branch ; a large black cross was carried by the

eldest ; then a dozen acolites and singing boys ; then the Vara painted green, and behind a band of forty musicians ; a muffled drum punctuated the steps as the procession wound up the steep path from San Pancrazio.

The level road attained, a full burst of music sounded and Chopin's heart-searching strains wailed as we wound between the tall houses, past the old gateways, along the grey walls frothing with white cluster roses. The balconies were filled with men bareheaded and women veiled in black. Each church was visited ; the Madonna was carried into the space before the altar where prayers were said, old peasant men bent with age knelt and kissed the Virgin's robe, while the women with eyes tear-blind pressed forward in the crowd that they too might pay their homage. Then the bearers resumed their burden, and on leaving the Duomo went down winding stairs along the narrow path towards San Domenico. The devout followed on, till, after two hours of slow step and "visitation," the Holy Mother was brought back to San Pancrazio, the church of the black saint, whose age for Christian rites ranks third in the whole of Europe, and before that Apollè was worshipped under the same roof.

On Good Friday afternoon two processions issue from different churches ; one group of bearers, acolites, and priests accompanies the catafalque which bears the body of the Crucified, life-sized, crowned with thorns ; no pain and wound is omitted in the crude realism, the burden is borne by men whose white caps are crowned with thorns. Candles flare and gutter in the hands of those who follow : the white sisters in their pure wool habits girdled with rope ; then a score of girls holding candles ; then come small children who

each carry on a cushion an emblem of the Passion—a miniature ladder, a scourge, a pillar, nails, hammer, every reminder of the antecedent pains of death by crucifixion ; then a long body of mourners, women of the town, dressed in black and with black veils ; last comes the effigy of the mourning Mother, her features marred with grief, who, starting from a different church, seeking her Son, finds the body at last. Her sad quest is over ; it is a poignant moment when the processions meet, and from henceforward she follows her dead Son. Then to the sound of wailing Elegy the whole cortège moves forward, and until long after dark the visitation to every church in the town goes on, and we hear the sad consort of sound, now close, now faint, between high buildings, a veritable March Macabre.

Tired and footsore, our hearts torn with emotion, our minds attuned to the knell of muffled drums, we get home at last to sleep.

But at five o'clock we are waked by the booming of cannon ; a hundred rounds are fired—a Royal Salute. We, unfamiliar with Sicilian custom, inquire the cause. "Christ is on His way to Paradise," says a stoical hall porter, surprised at our ignorance. Then at eleven the firing ceases, the bells crash out and children strike tins and gongs, an orgy of sound. "Christ has come to Paradise," and in the churches the veils before the altars are rent in twain : what magic symbolism, more convincing to us in this quiet, lovely place than ever it was with the rich and complex ceremonies in Rome.

Masses, flowers, saucers of sprouting corn, smiles, happiness, gifts of eggs, flowers, and cakes greet the Resurrection Morn ; absent members of families come home on visits, grandmothers clasp the arms of their

daughters and spoil the grandchildren, the women put on their best shawls and ear-rings, and the mules and carts appear with new red tassels and a superabundance of polished bells. Sons bring cakes, fearfully and wonderfully made, to the old folks at home; they cause strange erections of sugar, rich custard, and whipped cream and curd, sponge cake and candied fruit to be made for their friends, sugar icing is wrought into wonderful patterns, icing is coloured rose pink and green for floral garlands on the cakes, icing is made the sticky bed for the reception of the far-famed candied fruits of Sicily, in fact on Easter Sunday and Monday every conceivable device and size and type of cake is eaten, each more inconceivably rich and indigestible than the last.

Most important of all, the children eat the Pascal Lambs made of marzipan that one has seen in the shops during the whole of Lent, varying in price from 50 centimes to 100 lire. A people whose pleasure in emblems enables them to cook and eat cakes on All Saints' Day, made in the shape of skulls and cross bones, calling them "Biscuits of the Dead," can see no reason why they should refrain from munching Pascal Lambs fashioned in marzipan at Easter. Certain it is that the labelled Agnus Dei flag and the tinsel halo were all that remained when the delighted little gourmets had finished their feast. After all, have we not hot cross buns on Good Friday in England?

The Græco-Roman theatre is built on the side of a great limestone hill; lower down on the hill side is the Timeo Hotel—my balcony overhangs a sheer drop. On the terraces below there are orange trees in flower and the scent comes up almost too strongly.

Cypress spears grow out of a sea of new green almond

leafage, and there are old battlemented places further down the slope, until, nine hundred feet below, an almost tideless sea lies like a bit of sky dropped to the earth. Looking up, there is a sharp streak of white, and that is the snow-line ; up again and there is a puff of cloud or steam, faint grey against dazzling white, and that is Etna—"Nourisher of the Snow," as Pindar called the mountain.

Sometimes the sun-smitten steam takes the forms of battlements, and a faerie Castello crowns the white summit for a moment. Higher and yet higher one peak of smoke rises, and a campanile as fair as Giotto's Lily stands out on the crest, while a cloud casts shadows on the barren zone, so that the tower-crowned top swims in a mist of sapphire.

Etna has a thousand aspects, and each one is beautiful. Whether she stands grey, hardly perceptible, in twilight, just a flat background washed in by one of Nature's best fresco painters, or whether in gloomy mood, Mongibello sits brooding and dominant, that plume of smoke carried away in a long menacing streak, having more than a hint of devilry in it. Sometimes the crater shows like a one-eyed Cyclops, whose home was Sicily, the deep socket blown clear for a moment, and blinking on an unobservant world.

In another mood, the eye suggests merriment and a wink. I am sure Etna laughs at her own jokes and doubtless has many a surprise boiling up for coming generations.

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She is playing at hide and seek this afternoon ; it is a windless day, the mountain has spat out enough smoke to hide under, and is pretending not to be there.

Low banks of cirrus join in the fun, and we see only the lower slopes, pretty vine-clad hills with cloudy tops. No British man-of-war has ever made a more successful smoke screen than this joyous camouflage of nature.

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Etna is a bride to-day ; tall and stately she stands in profile. The misty tulle veil over her head in a marriage crown falls to her feet. At her back are folds of snowy white, without a thread of mist on them. Satin *beauté* arranged by a master hand in shimmery lines, fold on fold of virgin purity, makes a glorious court train. She is Italy's fairest and tallest mountain bride, and the perfume of orange blossom is in the air.

Soon we are going nearer to Etna. Shall we love her as well, when we see a little more of her doings ? I wonder.

CHAPTER VI

ETNA AND SOME LAVA TOWNS

(LINGUA GLOSSA, CATANIA, AND RANDAZZO)

ETNA, the volcano of Sicily, is the most interesting and stupendous feature in the island. Its surface is over 460 square miles, its height varies slightly according to the raising or lowering of the cone : in 1861 it was 10,800 feet ; in 1900, 10,700 feet above sea level. It is the highest mountain in Italy and the largest volcano in the world. It is older than Vesuvius, its basaltic rocks belong to the fossiliferous Pliocene days, and eruptions were going on during the glacial period of central Europe. It has a whole library and college to itself at Catania, where one can hear about all these wonders and see specimens of its Scorix, basaltic lava rock, known as labradorite ; sometimes this is prismatic, or in columnar formation, as at Aci Reale ; or spheroidal, as the rocks of Aci ; sometimes it has gas bubbles in it. The Grotte des Chèvres is described by experts as an enormous gas bubble in the lava. One sees glass cases full of specimens dating from Pliocene days, bombs made by Etna ; sulphur, lava in lumps, in wave-like shapes, in spirals and curls like the breaking froth of billows, which they have been, but are now cold and solid.

No wonder that legends have grown up throughout the ages to account for the thunderous noises, fire

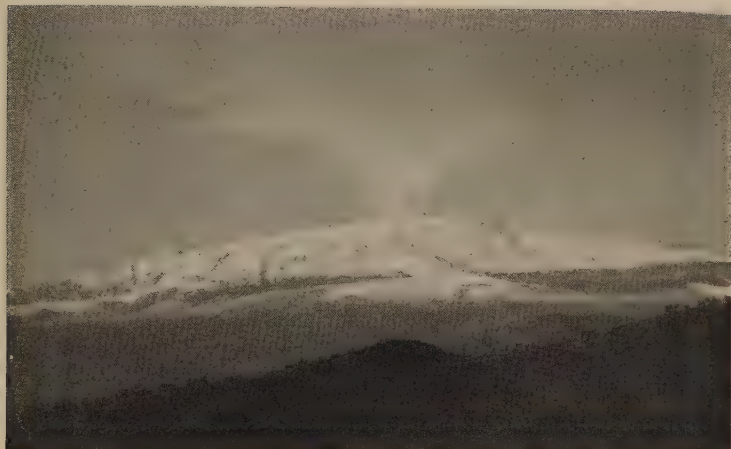
spoutings, rock and lava streams. One ancient story tells that as Enceladus was flying over the sea, Athene threw the island of Sicily upon him and ever after he has been trying to get free; Virgil describes an eruption and the sufferings of Enceladus:

Near it Etna thunders with horrible ruins and sometimes sends forth to the skies a black cloud, ascending in a pitchy whirlwind of smoke and glowing embers, throws up globes of flame and kisses the stars: sometimes belching, flings on high the ribs and shattered bowels of the mountain, and with a rumbling noise, in wreathy heaps, convolves in molten rocks, and boils up from the lowest bottom. It is said that the body of Enceladus, half consumed with lightning, is pressed down with this pile, and that cumbrous Etna laid above him, is therefore still spouting forth flames from its burst furnaces, and that as often as he shifts his weary side, all Trinacria, with a deep groan, inly trembles, and overspreads the heaven with smoke.

It is a pretty idea that Ceres lit her torches at Etna's fires when she sought Proserpine—the torches are to be seen on Sicilian coins.

Let us get back to the mountain itself. It is called Mongibello by Sicilians, from their own word Monte, and the Saracen name Giabel Huthamet, the mountain of fire. On one side is a sterile abyss called the Val del Bove; it is three miles wide, and perpendicular cliffs rise from it 2,000 to 4,000 feet high. It has about 200 subsidiary craters which are called Etna's "Sons"; they rise over lateral fissures.

There are three zones: up to 3,000 feet the land is very fertile, wheat, vegetables, and all sorts of crops requiring water can be grown; above that, where water is scanty, vines and olives flourish. These two



ETNA FROM TAORMINA

Galati Crupi



PEASANTS OF LINGUA GLOSSA.
ETNA DISTRICT



FARM HALF DESTROYED BY LAVA WHICH
FLOWED THROUGH THE HOUSE LEAVING
OUTER WALLS STANDING

E. Ward

districts are densely populated. The next zone has few inhabitants and is chiefly wooded. It was from Etna's pine woods, *Pinus nigri*, that Dionysius the Tyrant got his timber to build his fleet for the great war against Carthage in 397 B.C. ; the pines grow up to 6,800 feet, with birchwoods, *Betula alba*, chestnuts, and beeches. On the third height vegetation is scanty, some stunted sub-Alpine shrubs, but no Alpine flowers grow. In the last 2,000 feet only five species of plant life grow, three of these are peculiar to the mountain.

As to eruptions, Thucydides describes them in the eighth and the fifth centuries B.C. Livy writes of them as taking place in 126, 122, 43 B.C. Altogether about eighty eruptions are historical. The most violent were those of 396, 126, 122 B.C., and A.D. 1169, when Catania was overwhelmed, 1329, 1537, and 1669, the last being the most stupendous of all, when Monte Rossi was formed and 27,000 people were rendered homeless. After twenty-four years came an eruption accompanied by earthquake, when forty towns were destroyed and 100,000 people lost their lives. In 1843 and 1852 lava streams burst forth near Bronte and in the Valle del Bove, and in 1865 at the base of the Monte Frumento, which is north-west of the main crater.

In 1879 lava came from the same spot, and there was a second eruption from the corresponding side of the mountain at the same height, an unusual variation; the main crater made no effort except to vomit forth steam, sand, and ashes.

A new hill 560 feet high was formed which is called Monte Margherita; the lava poured forth at the rate of 15 feet per minute, afterwards 3 feet per minute, and then 30 feet per hour. In its course

it devastated a large tract of cultivated ground and crossed the road from Lingua Glossa to Randazzo, and did not cease to flow till it reached the river Alcantara ; the superficial area of this stream was two and three-quarter million square yards.

As we listen to these astounding figures we look up at Etna, whose "Cap of Snow" is at the moment more in evidence than her "Heart of Fire." Is all this possible? Let us go and personally inspect a (comparatively) little lava stream which burst forth only two years ago.

This entailed a long and lovely drive over the mountains. Past great stony beds of rivers, waterless but for a tiny trickle, past mountain cities, perched up on rocks and limestone peaks, each one with a watch tower ; "Safety first" the old and ever new desire.

Creeping up to Castiglione with its twin mediæval castles, each balanced on a knife edge, we overtook a simple funeral cortège, with great fantastic wreaths tall as a man, tribute of love perhaps, but seeming rather sad and artificial in that homely setting.

We entered the region called "Sconfetta." It is rather wonderful that after fifteen hundred years the *contadini* on these slopes of Etna, close to Maniace, should still use that word in every-day talk, which refers to the ruin or discomfiture of the Saracens in the eleventh century.

George Maniaces, the Byzantine General, a Greek, led his Italians, Asiatics, and Norman knights up by the Simeto, whose name was then Simethus, and, camping near wood and water, waited for Abd Allah's hosts, who poured down from beyond Etna to the plain. Abd Allah sowed the ground with iron barbs, fatal for horsemen, but Maniaces, assisted by a wind at his back

(and how it can blow in Etna's regions !), ruined and discomfited the Saracen hosts. Then was the town of Maniace founded which is now the capital of the Duchy of Bronte, the seat of the Duca di Bronte.

The Duchy of Bronte, bestowed on Nelson in 1799 by Ferdinand IV, has descended differently from the English earldom. By Sicilian law the daughter of Nelson's brother, the first earl, took precedence of the male heirs of Nelson's sister, to whom the English entail went.

She married the ancestor of the present owner of the estate, who yesterday entertained King George V of England and Queen Mary to luncheon at his Taormina villa and conducted them over the Greek Theatre, while we all cheered and waved tiny Union Jacks, obtained from an enterprising Sicilian shopkeeper.

What historical stepping-stones are we descending as we drive on the mountain slopes, leading from Maniace and the discomfiture of the Saracens in the eleventh century to the descendant of our great Nelson, owner of the Castello Maniace and all these broad lands—onward, to the visit of our beloved King of England and Emperor of one-fifth of the world beyond the seas. How good it is to be an Englishwoman, especially when one is abroad, surrounded in every hotel by Germans who are spending our money freely !

Suddenly, as we drive towards the mountain, we see before us a great black mass of twisted and distorted boulders, wicked-looking walls, rusty black. It seems impossible to believe that this horror once came rolling down and drowned the bright countryside.

When anything is destroyed in a lava flow the peasants say it is buried a hundred years deep, for that

is the time which must pass before the land can again become fertile.

It is almost unbelievable that this filthy mass rolls forward compact, a wall of monstrous thickness, its 20-foot high sides rearing up and blasting everything it touches—flowering tree, as that peach yonder, tender shrub in spring flowering, all flame as matchwood at its touch.

Great spreading chestnuts wilt with the heat, shrivel ; then the mighty trunk burns and is eaten up alive. Sometimes rocks resist the pressure, but in the end the lava just piles up and falls over, covering them.

We feel rather than see Etna above us, in her sublime beauty, the evil genius, the source of all this horror : from each manifestation of ruin we look up at the faint puff of smoke rising into the sky, a terrifying indication of possibilities far worse than this small local outburst of two years ago.

At our feet are ruined hopes, wasted industry, blasted lives ; poor bits of land with hard won terraced gardens, buried vineyards with 40,000 vines, gone irretrievably for a century, thickets of filberts, each cherished individually, since planted and paid for by thrifty folk, with toil and sweat—swallowed up by the Mountain Dreadful, who, though quiet now, is biding her time ; then in some other district now green and wholesome there will be not a blade of grass, nothing but this foul and rusty black mass 20 feet high, with deep holes where the stuff has cooled and shrunk, and patches of yellow crystals stinking of sulphur. Think of the force of it when it thundered forward a molten mass.

After two years this lava is still hot ; a big boulder is pushed over and steam comes forth and we get

stones stained with sulphur and too hot to hold—
after two years !

Sometimes things curious and grotesque are added to the horror. In one part, the lava, like blocks of stone from some tremendous avalanche, had blazed its path right through a house at Lingua Glossa, knocking down and filling it from north to south and leaving the western façade untouched, erect, and so it still stands, blackened with smoke and heat, but upright on one side as the builders made it.

If such a small eruption as the mile-wide stream of 1923 is still hot, bare and abhorrent as I saw it, what of those other huge and overwhelming catastrophes that fall within the limit of history, and the earthquakes—Messina's disaster within our time : only forty seconds quake, but nearly every building dust, and 80,000 people killed. A demon mountain.

Amongst the spoilers of cities and wreckers of buildings in Sicily, Etna is chief, more destructive even than the "restorers" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

To the Sicilian, Etna, though a menace, is also the mother of fertility ; he ignores the force which he can never tame, refusing to be mastered by a dread which, if acknowledged, would make his life one long misery of ineffectual precautions, leaving no time for construction and achievement.

Etna is a sublime discord, a paradox, a death that is life giving, the mouth of hell yawning wide from heaven.

CATANIA

We are informed by guide-books that this town has only forty-five wet days in the year ; we were there two

days, and when we left there were only forty-three that had to be wet to make the estimate correct !

The old name of Catania was Catana, then Etna, and this seems suitable, for it is *on* the mountain, *of* the mountain, its palaces, churches, monasteries are built of lava, its streets are paved with it. Its most famous piece of sculpture, the antique elephant of the chief Piazza, is made of lava; its shape is an allusion to Catania's victory over Carthaginians.

In an old traveller's account of Catania occur these words, "retired to rest, on a bed so hard I believe it to have been made of lava." I cannot personally corroborate this statement, but believe the traveller was right in his surmise. After eating the bread which the municipality supplies we feel sure that this also is made of pumice-stone.

It is interesting to read in a diary of fifty years ago :

From the moment I enter Catania and behold black houses, black roads, black flagstones, black dust, black earth, and a black harbour, and a black lava shore, I hate it. As to its much-vaunted climate, I have already caught a cold.

There is an amphitheatre in the Piazza Stesicoro nearly 400 feet long; it accommodated 1,500 spectators. It now accommodates lava only.

The Greek and Roman remains such as Ninfeo, Naumachia, the Forum, Curia, the Gymnasium and Circus and the Arch of Marcellus, are all either partly destroyed by, or still completely under, lava.

It is a depressing town in the rain, though flourishing as to trade; it has a beautiful harbour, where much sulphur and many lemons are shipped.

We need hardly say that Catania's ancient heroes

earned their notoriety in connection with lava. They are called the Two Pious Folk of Catania—the brothers Amphinomis and Anapias who, though very rich,

set such great store by their parents that they recked nothing of gold and silver ; but when a stream of fire poured down from Etna, picked up this one his father, that one his mother, and fled. As they toiled onwards the flames overtook them. But even so, they did not drop their parents, so the stream of lava, it is said, parted in two, and the fire passed on without catching either the young men or their parents.

These figures appeared on the old coins of Catania and also on Roman silver denarii, on which two figures pick-a-back are engraved.

The Catanian attitude towards Etna, its charm, its dangers, treachery, and murderous destructiveness, is very interesting :

The town is happy to rest at the foot of so fair an object. Does she not bring us, in her second zone, corn, wine, oil, silk, spice, fruit ; in her third zone, wood, flocks, game, tar, cork, honey, while her snow cools our wine in summer ?

If you hint at any disagreeables attending an eruption or earthquake, they say : “ No spectacle in the world is so grand as her blazing lava.” A thoughtful inhabitant declared that Etna’s convulsions supplied the Sicilian’s cravings for deep emotions. “ All our poetry comes from her.” They are quick to resent any slighting terms, and are quite angry with Homer for not mentioning her smoke.

An English family who descended hastily when an eruption broke out were treated with contempt :

"They are not volcanic like the Sicilians, these Inglesi."

The Catanian Monastery of Benedettini of S. Nicolo is enormous ; at the revolution the monks were terrible sufferers. It is said that rich charities which were in their charge were not always administered in accordance with the wishes of the people.

In 1400 Abbot Tremeno of Naples addressed a letter to the monks, who were all of the well-to-do classes, which began : " Ye Benedictines now think of nought but dining and courting ; what would S. Benedict say were he to descend to pay you a pastoral visit ? " This exhortation had been read every day at dinner for four and a half centuries without much effect. At the revolution the monks were dragged from their beds and massacred in great numbers.

In the Cathedral of S. Agatha there is a picture of one of the destructions of Catania by Etna in 1669, which was preceded by total darkness. The flowing lava ran down from a crater close to Nicolosi : arriving before Catania's walls, it had to rise more than 60 feet before it could pass over them. Piling up irresistibly, it passed over, and in the foreground a group of monks with relics and S. Agatha's veil, are hastening towards a barge awaiting them. For some time after this, faith in S. Agatha's miracle suffered eclipse, but is now revived. Alexandre Dumas says that the miracle only fails when the faith of the suppliants is not strong enough ; this is a good practical reason, easily silencing unbelievers.

S. Agatha is the patron saint of Catania, where she was martyred by means of a beautifully squared gridiron, shown on the carved choir stalls. Severed breasts, arms, and legs follow in the next section, but

CATANIA



CONVENT OF BENEDITTINI, CATANIA, ONE OF THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD



CASTILLO ORSENO. BUILT BY FREDERICK I. 1296-1337

Galiff Crupi

the story is rather complex. Her dead body was taken to Constantinople. *Her ashes* were brought back to Catania in the twelfth century, and the muscles of her arms and legs were then found to be in a perfect state of preservation, whether by embalming or by a miracle I have not been able to find out. Her valuable crown was presented by our Richard Cœur de Lion when he was on his way to the Crusades. It is a finely wrought gold diadem, with emeralds, sapphires, and amethysts round the head-band, above are crosses and other devices, also gem studded. On February 5 the marvellous gems, votive offerings, and jewelled bequests adorn the figure of S. Agatha in the great processions and ceremonies which take place on that day.

It seems strange to find these quaint medallions of English history in Sicilian records, but stranger even than Catania's martyr's crown from England is the fact that S. Thomas à Becket of Canterbury is the patron saint of the Duomo of Marsa-Allah, the "Harbour of God" of the Saracens in Sicily.

When the monks of Benedettini at Catania had been massacred or fled, the largest monastery in Europe was shut up, and now in odd corners of it great scientific departments are housed, but it is a wandering, echoing, thundering barrack of a place, with the lower windows barred up and great courtyards moss grown.

One wing of this vast town of a building has been turned into a municipal school, and we went round the colonnade of lava and stucco and saw the gardens, which were intended to be prim and quaint, but the huge size had been too much for puny efforts and the place was only gaunt and grim and weedy.

The statues were green, the stone basins waterless, and a dreary fountain in the middle was broken; the

shrubs looked out of place, and everything was either overgrown or choked, so that it could not grow at all. The place was mildewed and damp, and yet full of grit, pumice stone, and horrible lava, twisted, contorted, black.

One of the great scientific departments in the convent is the Royal Astronomical Observatory, where we saw a marvellous camera for photographing the stars. It moves round by means of the most delicately adjusted machinery to keep pace with their movements. There were telescopes which, by means of their perfect revelations of facts, invisible to human eyes, caused voluminous correspondence with Einstein in correcting some of his theories of relativity.

Besides these marvellous modern scientific instruments, the Benedettini monastery houses an enormous library of books, treatises, and records relating to Etna; there one may devote half an hour, or a lifetime, to the study of this truly devilish mountain, and see on a contour map in pink, red, black, and grey paint how Etna has exploded in flames, run in rivers of fire, spit out burning ashes, smashed, burnt, and destroyed more lives and property than one can tell, assisted by her two hundred odd "sons," as the subsidiary craters are called. According to the colour of the paint one knows the century when each eruption has occurred, and how many victims have suffered lava-death.

The inhabitants of Catania seem to take a kind of pride in these fiendish manifestations, and will tell you that "a good lava stream runs through the town near Castello Usino," and that "the Via Lincoln is cut through lava," and other particulars of their lava demon.

Another relative of the volcano family also has a

scientific inquiry office at the monastery. Earthquakes are registered. One exquisitely poised complication registers seismic disturbances in the neighbourhood ; another instrument, part of whose equipment is a tube, beginning in a tower and going 100 feet into the bowels of the earth, shows far away earthquakes. We were pleased that the first was making no records, but sorry that the contents of the large tube could provide nothing to agitate the needle.

To assuage our disappointment at the inactivity of earthquakes, we descended many dark stairs, where there is a large well. Into this the unscientific may drop a stone, and wonder that it does not reach the water for a space of time, which was variously described by different members of the party as ten minutes, or fifteen seconds. Our guide tried to instruct us as to this well being used to register the motion of the sea, but the agitation of our minds concerning the time of stone dropping prevented our hearing anything that was said about neap-tides, rather a difficult subject to follow in the Sicilian dialect.

To the lay mind the miracles of S. Agatha, the mere joining of arms and legs, sound very simple in comparison with these miracles of modern science.

RANDAZZO

Randazzo is on a cliff rising abruptly and overhanging the bed of the river Alcantara, which washes the eastern base of Etna. The town is the highest on Etna, and has hitherto escaped destruction owing to the deep valley which separates it from the mountain, and the ministrations of Gagnini's Madonna.

Its moss-grown gateways and unbroken battle-

mented walls are just as they were long ago ; the ancient Campanile stands erect, with the shooting angel of S. Martino as its weather-vane.

The lovely marble Madonna by Gagnini in S. Nicolo is finer even than that in the Duomo at Taormina. She has worked many a miracle for the townsfolk by turning away the wrath of Etna when lava streams threatened Randazzo ; the deep valley between the mountain and the town makes the miracle more effective.

There is one really beautiful place leading off the main street, where many doorways and windows of Renaissance work are to be seen. The Volta S. Nicolo is one of the finest specimens of Gothic architecture in Sicily. There is a long arched passage, with a fine double window, where a house was built across the street in the fourteenth century ; the window has twisted columns ; the passage leads on to the church and to the ruins of the fourteenth-century Convent of S. Nicola.

The Museum contains some very beautiful objects, Phœnician and Greek antiques ; some of the Phœnician glass is the finest known, but we never saw it, as the custodian had gone for a walk and taken the key in his pocket.

We were a merry group of friends and the sun shone, but the town, black, and built of lava, depressed us. Even before we entered the old gateway we were a silent party, for great bare spaces of lava-blocked land surrounded us as we drove beneath the shadow of Etna. Here was what Matthew Arnold describes, “. . . the charr'd, blacken'd, melancholy waste, crown'd by the awful peak, Etna's great mouth, round which the sullen vapour rolls.”

The country-side seemed to be in a state of disarray



THE VOLTA S. NICOLO

and confusion altogether abnormal, however much we were prepared for desolation. Here was dead and buried industry, defeat of human effort by an elemental force which had brought annihilation amongst seemly fields and hedgerows.

We really wished to be cheerful and to ignore that yawning crater, in which ice and fire contend for victory, so we went to S. Nicola, where the fourteenth-century pulpit was so beautiful that we all felt happier ; then we went to see the quaintest little gate, which is at the back of the church. It shows three people in hell ; they do not look more depressed than some of the visitors to Randazzo and the inhabitants, to whom Etna is always threatening lava-death.

As we turned away we met a man, probably from Tortorici. He wore the loose brown clothes of the countryman instead of the black frieze of the Randazzo dandy ; they had faded to every shade of fawn and grey, where the sun had beaten down and rain had drenched him on the mountain side. On his head was the stocking cap of the peasant. His feet were shod with goat skin, with the fur outside, and thongs of leather bound the felt on his legs. He had a pleasant, handsome face, and grinned as we passed—such a nice grin ! A great staff was in his hand.

What had specially struck him as comic in our appearance, I wondered, or was it only a grin of friendliness ? I would have liked to know.

The women of Randazzo wear short white woollen cloaks, called Mantelline, sometimes over their heads, sometimes round their shoulders, and splendid strings of hollow gold beads with very long ear-rings.

There is a grim prison, which is called the Castello Ducale, and was built as a mediæval fortress. On its

square tower are still the iron spikes on which heads were exposed in the Middle Ages. It was pleasant to see nearby some of Randazzo's old ladies, looking happy and cheerful, with their heads turned away from the spiked prison. It was a doorstep rendezvous; half a dozen cronies were plying their needles and gossiping together; they moved as if making room for us to enter. "To every bird its nest is beautiful" says the Sicilian proverb. So we peeped in while we passed the time of day and tried to understand their Sicilian patois, and they laughed at our efforts.

It was a typical one-room interior, belonging to the very poor. A battered chest of drawers, the large bed, a little stove in which charcoal or any rubbish of waste odds and ends could be burned was on the floor. On the wall many grimy-looking pictures of saints, a postcard portrait of Mussolini and one of Boston City, U.S.A., where the eldest son had gone. Three hens pecked about the floor and another came squawking out of a box under the bed, leaving her chickens, who could not scramble out.

Charles V visited Randazzo, but only stayed one night—wise man.

PART II

CHAPTER VII

JEWELLERY, PLATE, ENAMELS, FANS, BEADS, AMBER, CORAL, COINS

IN Motya, in Sicily, colonized by the Phœnicians, a few ornaments have been found in tombs; finger rings, two of silver, are in the Museum, the bezels have Phœnician characters on them, other rings have scarabs.

Three large seal rings are engraved with hieroglyphs. The gold objects are very few—rings, ear-rings of the fruit-basket pattern, and pendants of simplest design.

To few is given a deep enough purse for the purchase of Greek and Roman jewels found in Sicily. The delicate flakes of gold, leaf-shape, which go to make a filet, the gold wires, beads, and barrel-shaped ornaments which form ear-rings, the bands of gold, sometimes signed by the maker, and repoussé, with heads of heroes or the forms of nymphs.

Very fine examples are to be seen in Sicily in private collections, and also in the hands of those dealers who make a speciality of such gems, and the collector will be careful to note the obvious difference between the jewels of wearers in real life and those ornaments buried with the dead, which were frequently mere models of thinnest metal and scant workmanship, representing what would be the decoration of the departed in a future life.

The amphora, a favourite form of ornament, is to be found in minute form in fine goldsmith's work. These are used for Greek ear-rings and, strung on a chain, as necklaces. I have seen oval plates ornamented with spiral patterns found near Girgenti and small pendants with fine gold filigree. The most numerous finds appear to be ear-rings, but unless in the collection of a rich man, one seldom sees a pair; animals' heads sometimes ornament these, or a hook will hold one or two pendants of various kinds, one perhaps an amphora or bead, another a tiny figure of Victory.

There are gold beads, sometimes ornamented with globules, sometimes with granulation. Bulls' and rams' heads in gold seem to have been much used as ends to bracelets or necklaces, but the bars or chain have often perished. Serpents and birds are also used, and an engraved cylinder, probably used as a seal, is mounted in gold. Sard, agate, and amber intaglios and cornelian beads I saw in two collections, and gold pins of large and practical size were not uncommon; there were many of the safety-pin type. The sepulchral wreaths are very beautiful; the gold leaves, almost as large as life, were rolled thin as paper.

The finest piece of prehistoric gold plate I have ever seen from Sicily is now in the Gem room of the British Museum: it is a gold bowl or candlestick about $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches across, with twisted ornament round the rim. In the centre is a depressed circle, within which is soldered a broad ring of gold, decorated with four circles alternately of plain wire and globules; along the top of the ring runs another row of globules, now for the most part missing. Within the inner side of the bowl are embossed designs of six bulls, all impressed

from the same stamp. They walk slowly in procession, with upright horns, thick necks and heavy legs. On their thin flanks four embossed lines indicate the bones of their ribs. This wonderful bowl was found in the village of S. Angelo, ten miles from Girgenti. In 1769 there were known to be four of them, two plain and two with bulls; they were in the Episcopal library at Girgenti. "Two of them were sold to an Englishman by a canon of the church as though they were private property," writes Mr. E. H. Marshall in his catalogue description, quoting a contemporary.

The sumptuary laws framed in the island to limit the use of jewels and other costly details of wearing apparel amongst the rich in the sixteenth century were also extended to the peasant population who, up to fifty years ago, have been great jewel wearers. It is interesting to note that samples are occasionally found which bear internal evidence of the evasion of such laws.

Jewellers contrived big, showy ear-rings and breast ornaments which were so light that the penalty of the law could not touch the wearer; with the gold wire of the filigree workers large spaces could be left so that a maximum surface would be combined with minimum weight.

Unfortunately, of such tell-tale and fragile specimens few have survived: there were travelling goldsmiths who took orders and even worked at country fairs, and many a great family employed a goldsmith amongst the retainers. The name of Benvenuto Cellini has been found on the pay roll of the Medici family at Florence, together with an account of the very simple implements provided for him in his workshop at the Palace.

One sees how strong is the Byzantine influence in

some of the Sicilian jewellery, whose characteristics are practically identical with the Adriatic type; the enamel work and the crescent pattern are particularly noticeable. It is possible that many of the examples found in Sicily may have been made in other districts. Models from the workshops of the Venetian goldsmiths would be imported and copied; definite geographical names are impossible.

Seed pearls were much used, either pendant from the body of the ornament in tassels or fringes, or attached to a gold plate by gold wire. Painted enamel fills shallow cells, giving the bright-coloured decoration so attractive to Sicilians, in ear-rings, brooches and pendants. The Oriental feeling is also shown in crescent-shaped pendants, usually heavily fringed with threaded seed pearls.

The fine specimens of Adriatic jewellery collected by Signor Alessandro Castellani, which were shown at the Paris Exhibition in 1867, were purchased *en bloc* by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, so that it is possible to continue the study of this interesting subject in England. In the Louvre also there are good specimens.

One of the favourite patterns, either for ear-rings or pendant, is a full-rigged ship, entirely Spanish in feeling. In the specimen before me, a design on gold enamelled in blue is outlined in seed pearls, a rosette in the centre of the looped ring, for threading, is blue, and a baroque pearl is in the centre; depending from this three-quarter inch ornament is a ship with three masts, it has sails entirely of threaded pearls, the hull of the ship is of blue enamel in flower forms, and a fringe of one large and one small pearl hangs from the keel of the ship.



GOLD AND SEED PEARL EARRINGS, 18TH
CENTURY, BELONGING TO LADY HUDSON



SILVER INCENSE VESSEL, TRAPANI, 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ INS. MRS. JOSHUA
WHITAKER'S COLLECTION

Another pair of ship ear-rings has no top ornament, the sails are of gold plate, bent to simulate inflation by the wind, the hull is of plain gold enamelled, and there are seven oblong pearls hanging from quarter-inch loops of gold wire. Yet another ship design shows pearl-gemmed sails, an enamel and pearl figurehead, a hull set with pearls threaded on gold wire, and eight pendant wires with oblong pearls and round ones above.

Crescent ear-rings frequently have an ornament in enamel on the centre of the upper line. A bird standing, or poised for flight, a flower, such as a tulip, or conventionalized floral form of some kind; these decorations will be similar to the body of the crescent, namely thin gold with shallow cells filled with opaque enamel in polychrome. The pearl fringe or bunches depend from the lower edge of the crescent, and in rare examples a row of small enamel pendants replaces the pearl fringe.

Another charming shape, which appeals at once to the Sicilian, is a bunch of grapes formed entirely of seed pearls pierced and wired on to a gold base. Sometimes a large bunch will form the whole ear-ring, sometimes loops of threaded pearls lie on a gold or enamel background, and from this depend one large and two small bunches of grapes. Pearls threaded on gold wire, and then wound round a pear-shaped core of gold, occasionally make the bunch of grapes; in whatever form this decoration is charming.

Another favourite conceit of the Sicilian jewellery is the pendant flower-basket, a design handed down from the Greeks. Made of plain filigree, the basket will be filled and over-running with pearls of all sizes, some on wire stems on which green enamel leaves appear,

some of smaller sizes to simulate a bunched flower, like heliotrope in shape; red enamel is used for tiny flowers, and the beauty of the pearls is enhanced by the contrast.

A tiny basket of enamel has pearls in bunches of grapes overrunning the edges and hanging down, a large bunch of pearl grapes fills the basket, which depends by its gold handle from a looped ornament.

Garnets, amethysts, and sometimes paste are used sparingly with the seed pearls and gold.

Unfortunately, the enrichment of a Sicilian family by industry, or by the emigration to America of one or more of the family and the prosperous return, does not have the effect of increasing the store of old and inherited jewels of gold or silver, rather it increases the desire to cast off the old national dress of which the jewels formed so important a part. Affluence brings the delight in land or houses, but lessens the hunger for old-fashioned jewels. Then there is the traveller in cheap jewellery who will obligingly take old jewels in part exchange, and so the precious examples reach the melting pot, and the old-time ravages of princes for treasure to replenish their resources and finance little wars is replaced by the ravages of the petty merchant.

In such treasures as that of the Cathedral of Castrogiovanni lie another of the causes of the disappearance of so many of the fine pieces of old Sicilian jewellery. Votive offerings to such favourite shrines are of great intrinsic value; as records of the craftsmanship of old days they are beyond price. That ornament wrought with pearls perhaps represents the thank-offering of a woman for her recovery from some grievous malady; those ear-rings of gold enamelled with black points,

green palm leaf, and set with garnets, are the gift of a mother whose baby boy recovered from illness, and so she gladly forgoes the ornaments which made her the envy of the village on feast days. What tale of human ill is wrought on the band of costly gifts which, sewn tightly on to bright-coloured stuff, forms the garniture worn by the Black Madonna of Castrogiovanni when she is taken down from her place behind the altar !

Her crown dates from the sixteenth century and is eight inches high, a mass of jewels, rubies, sapphires, great tourmalines and emeralds ; round the base are exquisite little medallions chiselled in gold and overlaid with enamel : scenes from the life of Christ, the Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation of Gifts by the Magi, and the Ascension, in two-inch oval medallions. We were fortunate in being able to assemble the four guardians of the keys, who must each be present to unlock the safe doors. The rich jewel was held up for examination, then replaced in the beautiful old tooled leather case and a monstrance of pure gold displayed. The rays are plain, other parts set with diamonds, garnets, sapphires and emeralds ; an interesting dog-toothed ornament of lapis lazuli gives a beautiful note of colour.

The crown of S. Agatha of Catania, given by Richard Cœur de Lion, is very fine. Other jewels in the Catania treasury are the ring of Gregory the Great, the pectoral cross of Leo XIII, given when he was Archbishop of Perugia, and a modern ring with a superb pearl given by the Dowager Queen of Italy. There is a fine reliquary, and a bust like that of S. Catherine of Siena, of silver, contains the legs and head of the saint.

On the picture of the Madonna, at the little village

of Custonaci, near Trapani, which was brought by unguided oxen in about the sixteenth century to this spot, quantities of jewels have been lavished. Round the nimbus is a raised band of gold set with twelve diamond stars; a large diamond ear-ring hangs in the ear which is visible. Three large diamond rings are on her fingers, and an immense quantity of jewellery is suspended on her skirts. The frame of the picture is coated with silver plates in the form of a Renaissance doorway, with fluted columns and pediment; this frame is hung with ear-rings, chains, necklaces, rings, watches, etc. A large chest in the Sacristy contains twice as much more. This treasure is called the dowry of the Madonna, and accompanies her when she is taken to Trapani on the occasion of drought, sickness, or any other calamity; the diamond stars are, however, removed before the picture goes on its journey, and are replaced by gold stars. When a procession is undertaken the dresses for the actors and actresses are hired, and peasant and well-to-do families lend valuable jewels, which are always safely returned.

The silver plate of Trapani bears a sickle as mark with the letters V.D. on one specimen examined, and other lettering according to the date of manufacture. Beautiful little bowls with two handles are to be found, melon-shaped cups and large important trays. The repoussé work is very bold, with flower motifs singly, in natural size; the tulip seems to be the most frequently represented. Every object for church use was made in silver at Trapani, and the small holy water stoups, lamps, and other objects for house use are very numerous. Little seems to be known to connoisseurs of the Sicilian silver marks: with diffidence, after personal inspection, it is possible to mention



TRAY OF TRAPANI SILVER EMBOSSED, 11INS. HIGH. 18TH CENTURY. FROM MRS. R. WHITAKER'S COLLECTION



MONSTRANCE OF GILT COPPER WITH CORAL ENCRUSTATIONS; GREEN PASTE CIRCULAR ORNAMENT, PROBABLY LATER, SPANISH. 15INS. HIGH



CHALICE, SILVER GILT, DECORATED WITH PLAQUES OF FINELY CARVED AMBER, 15TH CENTURY. 13½ INS. BOTH AT THE MUSEO NAZIONALE, PALERMO

the Eagle mark of Palermo in one case with the date 1784.

The dolphin of Messina.

The elephant with obelisk on his back of Catania.

The lamp of Syracuse.

Much old silver is found in Sicily with the royal crown of Naples, resembling the royal crown of France, also found in Sicily, owing to the Bourbon occupation.

The finest specimen of old Sicilian silver I have examined is the great altar frontal and decorations amongst the Cathedral treasures of Castrogiovanni, the Enna of old times. The subject of the frontal is the working of the First Miracle.

Ten hanging lamps for the sanctuary at Enna measure 27 inches, and their silver chains are complete. Other altar furniture was made by the Palermo, Trapani, and Messina silversmiths in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, besides monstrances, gem-studded chalices, and reliquaries, models of human arms, legs, hearts, busts, and other votive pieces.

In the Museum at Castrogiovanni there are two altar frontals of red velvet, on which is laid down an elaborate silver frame with rays reaching almost to the centre, where a massive ornament consists of the sacred monogram with rays. These frontals were once in the Church of S. Bernidetto, now closed. A third silver frontal is also in this Museum.

I also saw in Sicily silver frontals at Monreale Cathedral, at S. Agatha at Catania, one formerly at S. Olivetto, Palermo, now at the National Museum, Palermo, and two at the Messina Museum, rescued from S. Gregorio, ruined by the earthquake in 1908.

Chief amongst silver ornaments for lay use are the

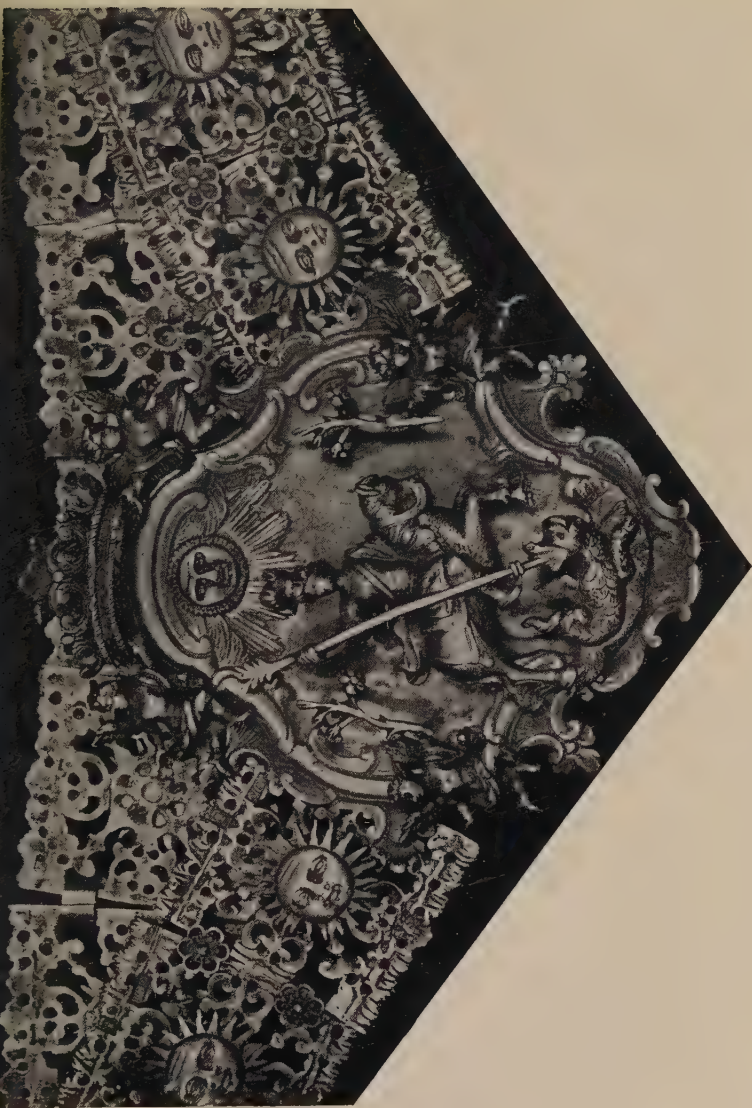
silver girdles worn by the peasants as part of their costume in Piano dei Greci. Princess Ganci and Mrs. Joshua Whitaker have very fine specimens, and there is one in the Palermo Museum, displayed on the dress to which it belongs, and another in the collection of the late Professor Petre. I believe there are many other privately owned examples, as they appeal strongly to collectors.

The girdles are generally in square sections in rather massive openwork design, and may be called the peasant edition in silver of the fine seventeenth-century ornament worn by ladies who could acquire gold and enamel girdles, from which dangled the pomander, trinket of the day.

Buckles for men and women in silver were mostly of simple floral pattern, for peasant wear ; other gauds include silver heads for knitting-needles, sometimes repoussé in silver, sometimes of filigree work : a similar trifle for peasant use was the ring-pendant, with well-wrought decoration, for the hook which was used to hold the thread while knitting.

Silver combs, spadetti, little sword and hair-pins are sometimes beautifully worked : one from Catania has a rope-like border, enclosing an inch-wide band of flower motifs, the prongs are also of silver ; Spanish influence is here seen, for the shawl or lace needs raising with a comb, to be well adjusted. The small low combs were for women near Syracuse and other districts who have their hair elaborately dressed, and do not cover it. We saw women hairdressers at work in the streets at Syracuse, their clients being some of the very poor.

To those who are interested in silversmith's art, peculiar to the Island, there is no more interesting



SILVER GIRDLE WORN WITH PEASANT'S DRESS, 1710. FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. JOSHUA WHITAKER

study than the silver and brass gilt objects probably made at Trapani during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which show signs of Spanish influence. They are often, but not always, enamelled, and are thickly studded with carved red coral figures, heads, pillars, bosses, and small irregularly shaped pieces.

Authorities surmise that this art was not practised longer than two hundred years: unfortunately few pieces are signed and dated; the latest dated example I have handled was of 1720, which is considered late for the work: it is in Mrs. Joseph Whitaker's collection.

Undoubtedly, inspired by Arab and Spanish taste, naturally traceable in so much decorative work in Sicily owing to the long Saracenic occupation, the general effect is decidedly baroque, which is perhaps the reason why it is not seen in the cabinets of English collectors.

Amongst the nine monstresses made of this coral decorated silver, in the National Museum at Palermo, a great variety of patterning is noticeable. The rays vary in thickness and in shape, some being straight spikes, others waved, their length as a rule measuring about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The finely modelled stems are thickly encrusted with coral, some shaped in accordance with the lines of the stem; others, evidently made by less skilled workmen, are simply odd-shaped pieces and bosses, put on with little relation to the lines of the structure.

One specimen only is further ornamented with a circle of silver, set with green paste, which looks as if it was a later addition, possibly of Spanish origin, by a workman during the Spanish occupation of Sicily: it unites the points of the rays. This monstresse stands 26 inches in height.

Enamel relief, generally white, is used to a very limited extent, and a sapphire blue still more rarely. A few flower-shaped ornaments occur on the white enamel.

The plaque or framed shrine which, having a carved figure of the Madonna or Patron Saint of the house, was placed at the head of the bed, beneath the canopy, of the principal sleeping room in a Sicilian house, was frequently made of this coral-encrusted work of Trapani. These *cappelle* or *chiesette*, little chapels, their colloquial name, were often given as marriage presents.

Mrs. Joshua Whitaker has probably the finest collection in the world, and it is interesting to observe that from two of her examples the inner plate holding the Madonna and Child or the Saint has been removed, and sheets of looking-glass substituted. The evidence of age in the mirror shows that it was at least a century ago that Beauty coveted the superb framing for the reflection of her own features, and the mutilated specimens remain to show what crimes may be committed in the name of vanity.

In the Villa Scalea is a Nativity Scene, perfect in every detail. Silver is used for the buildings, trees are of natural branched coral, the figure of the Virgin and Child are of carved coral. The whole group stands 27 inches in height, its base of rock-work is in silver, as well as the pillared stable walls and the animals. The trees of coral have large flowers with ray-like coral petals, and make a most decorative detail. The Virgin and Child are as finely carved as are those rose-red figures on the Pietà of the sixteenth century in the Silver Room at the Palazzo Reale in Florence.

Besides these church vessels and scenes of ecclesi-



SHRINE OF GILT COPPER, WITH WHITE ENAMEL, ENCRUSTED WITH BOSSES AND ROSETTES OF CORAL. THE VIRGIN STANDING AMONGST FLOWERS AND PILLARS IN CARVED CORAL. PROBABLY TRAPANI WORK SHOWING SPANISH INFLUENCE. 24½ INS. HIGH. 17TH CENTURY. FROM MRS. JOSHUA WHITAKER'S COLLECTION

astical significance, the coral-encrusted work was used for many other objects, which are more easily accessible for the collector : small tables about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 6, with carved coral legs, cabriole shape, and stretcher are fairly often to be seen ; doubtless they were used as stands for small treasures.

Silver trees with coral foliage and fruit remind one of the miniature landscapes of the Chinese which were made of jade, onyx, cornelian and other semi-precious stones, carved and grouped ; possibly the makers of this Trapani fancy had seen such an Oriental example, and the Chinese wave of taste in all art objects was anticipated in the silver and coral work of Sicily.

Coral used for the enrichment of embroidery and lace is mentioned under those headings.

Coral has always been considered the luck bringer. I have seen an old peasant woman, after loading her carretta with radishes and fennel for market, return to her cottage, put on her long coral necklace, and start off the donkey with the "A-a-a-h !" of the Sicilian driver.

The subject of amulets and talismans is such a large one that it is difficult to write of it in the space available, but the Sicilian gold and silversmith's art has been so much influenced by the superstitious beliefs of the people that it is impossible to ignore the subject.

From childhood the Sicilian bears some charm against bad luck, like his Greek and Roman ancestors. I have two examples in my mind, where early Italian artists have placed coral good-luck amulets on the neck of the Bambino when in his mother's arms. One, the Virgin enthroned, by Crivelli, is in the Vatican

collection, and the same subject by Benozzo Gozzoli in the Chiaramonte Bordonaro gallery at Palermo.

The curative use of coral is as old as history itself ; sometimes it must be wrapped in the skin of an animal, or set in conjunction with other stones, to cure hydrophobia. It must always be worn by the patient round the neck. A contemporary of Ovid writes of it as having power to dissolve the spell cast by the Evil Eye. A Hindu recommends it to be ground and eaten ; tincture of coral is described in an old pharmacopœia. Red coral was supposed to change colour according to the health of the wearer. Coral is undoubtedly established in the mind of the Sicilian peasant as the warder-off of the Evil Eye and the bringer of good luck.

So important is its benign influence considered that a coral-encrusted ornament, sometimes as large as 6 inches by 10 inches, is kept for placing on the chest of a child at his christening ceremony. It will be made up of rows of coral beads fastened at each end with handsome chased and repoussé silver clasps having pierced holes, where the bead threads can be fastened.

I have seen a bean pendant on a baptismal stomacher, preservative against witchcraft, with a bell, and also a small shell which, according to Professor Giuseppe Pitrè, protects a child in the danger of teething. There are few women of the peasant class, even to-day, who do not wear coral on some part of her dress, even if it is only a single bead sewn where it is not seen. The late Mr. J. A. Churchill says that "in ancient times a coral necklace formed an essential part of the wedding outfit of the woman of the people." Do we not in England still give baby girls coral necklaces, not knowing that this action has so much behind it, and



CHILD'S BAUBLE OF IRIDESCENT GLASS AND SILVER BELLS
 TOOTH PICK, WITH ARCHAIC BEAST
 TEETHING CHARM OF SHELL, CORAL AND BELLS
 DOUBLE SEA HORSE WITH FIGURE OF VICTORY
 AMULET OF CIMARUTI, KEY, FINGERS, MOON, RUE AND OTHER SYMBOLS
 GOLD PENDANT AND PEARLS
 DOUBLE-TAILED MERMAID BAUBLE
 PEASANT'S GOLD RING
 PINCHBECK BRACELET WITH ENAMEL ORNAMENT

does not an old nurse put a key down the back of a child whose nose is bleeding, while the key amulet in Sicily is used to prevent convulsions and hæmorrhage? Many charms against the Evil Eye are derived from Ophiolatry or serpent worship and from ancient classical legends; the sprig of rue comes from the worship of Diana, serpent charms from Æsculapius. Mermaid charms, generally but not always with fish tails, come from legends of sirens. The sea-horse is on a vase of Pluto and Proserpine in the Naples Museum, 250 B.C., it is crossing the Styx; in amulets the sea-horses are generally in pairs.

Later in life the child will have a small cornu or horn of silver or coral when he has finished with his coral gum-stick, and silver bells, to still keep off evil spirits, and a watchful mother will raise her thumb and little finger and close the three others, in the jettatura gesture, if she sees a stranger overlooking her child. Special occasions in the child's life will need special amulets, and there are wise women who will give advice on the matter and provide necessary charms.

As enamel on jewellery was invented for the purpose of introducing colour, it is not to be wondered at that the Sicilian peasant jewellery and other examples of goldsmiths' work in the Island show a large amount of this beautiful embellishment.

It was in the south-east corner of Europe that enamel first appeared; perhaps incrustation, usually the laying down closely on metal of thin slices of precious stones being its forerunner.

On searching for enamels in Sicily it is the unexpected which happens; one may chance to find an example of *basse taille* workmanship, that is, translucent enamel laid down upon metal previously chased and modelled

in low relief which shows through; the effect is very beautiful. There is also *enamel en ronde bosse*, that is, the small figures or motifs are in the round; they are generally opaque white on the metal, so that this is sometimes called *enamel en blanc*. Bright stones are usually set in the gold frames of these pieces, which may date back as early as the fifteenth century. It was in the seventeenth century that figures in relief went out of fashion in jewellery.

Part of a cross, or a missal cover, or a bit of candlestick with Byzantine enamel decoration are rare, but are to be found in unexpected country markets. The surface of these enamels has not the shiny look we are accustomed to, the pattern will be very simple and primitive, primary colours will be used, the enamel will be opaque, there will be lines of metal or cloison, but the colours will be laid on side by side irrespective of the metal lines.

Champlevé differs in process; there are troughs or cells in the surface of the metal to be decorated, and in these cells the pulverised enamel is laid and afterwards fused, filed down, smoothed and polished. The famous enamel of Limoges is generally in *grisaille* white on a black ground; the white is so modulated that, possessing translucency, a certain amount of light and shade is obtained. Portraiture was a good deal done. Colour used sparingly as well as foil. At the Villa Scalea are a series of Limoges enamels which were called "hard pictures," where they were found in a cottage years ago. One other type is very fragile, and so unlikely to be met with. The enamel was put into tiny metal framing with no support under it; the effect was semi-transparency, like a stained-glass window.

Little enamel pictures, such as those of Limoges, are generally *bombé*—that is, rounded—so that, being enamelled on both sides, they shall rest on their edges and not flat when being fired.

That important event in the world of Art, the discovery in the 18th century of the buried city of Pompeii, affected the trinkets and jewels of Sicilian make, as it did the ornaments of other countries of Europe. Everyone was a little tired of the beauty and elaboration of rococo ornaments; even the Pompadour returned to pseudo simple conditions of life, and later poor Marie Antoinette played at milk maiding, at the Petit Trianon, in sprigged muslins. So Sicilian jewellers provided simpler enamels connected by chains, gem and shell cameos, no longer framed in finely wrought gold and enamel with baroque pearl and table-cut jewels, but with simple metal bands; amethyst, topaz, and onyx necklaces became fashionable in graduated sizes.

BEADS

To begin with early examples of the beads of Sicily, one may study a very fine range of glass beads of Phœnicia at the National Museum at Palermo. Some Græco-Phœnician examples are almost as large as walnuts, the ground of blue, with yellow and green ornament, or of black glass with yellow discs. Some are cylinder shaped, others of malachite colouring; a half-inch cylinder-shaped bead is of onyx. There are large round examples in glass, with indentations like a melon, and pendant beads in the shape of animals' heads.

The beads, as part of Sicilian national dress, are very varied: of hollow gold, sometimes granulated, in the

Greek manner, of filigree gold and silver, worn either threaded in graduated sizes round the neck, or separated with small coral or cornelian beads. Necklaces of coral, amber, and cornelian beads are worn by the peasants on feast days, and the effect is very gay with the brightly coloured kerchief and skirt.

AMBER

The recently awakened taste for amber makes the collection of the cut beads a fascinating one. Sicily is a good place for the amber enthusiast, for this strange product is constantly thrown up, especially on her southern shores. A good string of clear brown cut beads may be acquired for a very few pounds, if a few are bought now and then when a good opportunity offers.

Connoisseurs are interested in the grey-blue shaded examples, whose technical name is "green" amber, which are to be found near Taormina and other districts. The shade seems to dim the beauty of the wine clear brown and gold, but as it is a rarity, amber lovers will be interested to note these unusual examples.

Brydone, in a letter to William Beckford in the eighteenth century, says, describing the river Simetus :

It throws up near its mouth great quantities of fine amber : this is carefully gathered by the peasants in the neighbourhood and brought to Catania, where it is manufactured into the form of crosses, beads, saints, etc., and is sold at high prices to the superstitious people on the Continent.

We bought several of these respectable figures, and found them electrical in a high degree ; powerfully attracting feathers, straws, and other light bodies.

Somewhat emblematical, you will say, of what they represent. Some pieces of this amber contain flies and other insects, curiously preserved in its substance, and we were not a little entertained with the ingenuity of one of the artists, who had left a large blue-bottle fly, with its wings expanded, exactly over the head of a saint, to represent, he told us, the Holy Spirit descending upon him.

Occasionally small buildings, such as a cottage or farm, may be found made of tortoise-shell inlaid with mother-of-pearl; the tiled roofing will be of small pieces of amber, the figures and animals also of carved amber, complete in every detail, similar to the carved wood figures and animals of the Nativity groups.

One need only visit the Palazzo Reale in Florence to see to what perfection the carving of amber figures could attain in those marvellous days of the Medici; to the collector, small examples still to be found in Sicily are interesting, and pleasantly vary a cabinet of the less rare Oriental amber carvings and those of S. Germany.

Occasionally carved plaques of amber ornament boxes or caskets. In Palermo Museum a beautiful chalice of silver gilt is decorated in this manner on the bowl, the stem, the knop, and the foot.

IVORY

Saracenic chests of wood were inlaid with ivory, and some of them are entirely made of it. Later, about the fourteenth century, these caskets were seldom executed in elephant ivory: almost always in fine quality bone, which is sometimes nearly equal to ivory in grain and texture. It is probably because ivory

could not be obtained in large enough quantity except at great cost. This reason accounts also for the inlaying of furniture with bone at the same period.

The fine quality of the workmanship shows that the sculptors in miniature for the caskets would have had the best material obtainable.

It is not always easy to identify the subject of such carvings. Before the thirteenth century they were Biblical, or scenes from the life of the patron saint of the town, or of the patron who gave the order; later, a poem or romance may be illustrated, or some episode in the family history of the bride or bridegroom, if the coffer was made on the occasion of a marriage.

Combs, mirror cases, and smaller objects in ivory and bone were frequently decorated with domestic scenes from legends, or with figures playing on musical instruments. Powder flasks have dogs, horses, and primitive hunting scenes, and draught-pieces have often lettering and elaborate scenes on them. Fine examples, such as the Last Judgment, at the Palermo Museum, are hard to find in good condition.

At the National Museum, Palermo, there is a very beautiful Christ carved in ivory; it is mounted on an amethyst and gilt bronze cross. Close to it is a fourteenth century pastoral staff, and there are two others, also in ivory, with sacred scenes in the volutes, and foliage carved on the framing; as a rule, the so-called ivory croziers have wooden staffs. Monreale also has ivory croziers.

Ivory carved fan-sticks are sometimes to be found in curio shops. In a country where there has been a long occupation of the Spaniard, one would expect to find good specimens of old fans. In this Sicily will not disappoint the collector.



IVORY CARVING OF THE LAST JUDGMENT, WITH FRAME AND STAND OF SILVER FILAGREE.
IVORY LUNETTE. 14½ INS. HIGH. 17TH CENTURY. BEQUEATHED TO MUSEO NATIONALE,
PALERMO BY SIGNOR F. GANDIANO

In every curio shop, on every counter where assorted trifles lie, a fan is sure to be found ; one sees every type, from finest carved stick and chicken skin to printed verse and French quip, with plain wooden sticks, together with the lace-trimmed specimens of later days.

When reading any old Memoirs of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century we find descriptions of the charm of the fan in the hands of the Sicilian ladies as they drove in the Corso, or took their short (very short) walks in the public gardens in the late afternoons. Fans never became the instruments of the people, their use for coolness, for coquetry, or what not was confined to the well-to-do. Princess Ganci has some beautiful specimens in her cabinets, and at the Villa Tasca there are some fine chicken skin and Vernis Martin examples with carved and jewelled sticks.

COINS

It is not difficult to obtain an interesting collection of early coins in Sicily, for people are constantly finding them whenever they dig—in their gardens, yards, fields, or even in the hedges and ditches of the highways.

It must be remembered that for its size Sicily has always been the most thickly populated island in the world : every important nation has hungered for its possession, and a good many of those nations have succeeded in obtaining a foothold for, at any rate, a few centuries, notably the Greeks for about 500 years from 734 B.C. Then the Romans followed them : in 827 A.D. the Saracens : then Normans in the eleventh century. In the fifteenth century Sicily became a part of Spain ; in 1765 there was a revolt in favour of Louis XIV of France ; then came Philip V of Bourbon

after 1713, King of Spain ; 1713, Victor Amadeus of Savoy ; 1720, Emperor Charles VI of Germany. Not till 1815 was Ferdinand IV " King of the Two Sicilies," and in 1860 Garibaldi landed at Marsala with his Thousand, fought the battle of Calatafimi and obtained unity with Italy.

No wonder that many and strange coins are to be found in Sicily ; in fact, examples of the ancient coinage of the world have been dropped in her streets and left on her fields.

A few facts without too many technical terms about this fascinating subject may interest general readers, for it is obvious that this slight sketch is not for experts. Having no special training in the study of coins, I was at once struck by their extreme beauty and their enormous value as pictorial history ; few who have seen the great decadrachma of Syracuse, struck after their conquest of the Athenians 413 B.C., and the coins which date from the reign of the tyrant Gelo, will fail to realize that this was one of the most beautiful of the plastic arts, and that Sicilian medallists rivalled painters and sculptors in direct vision and poets and historians in imagery and symbolism.

Mr. G. F. Hill, M.A., of the department of coins in the British Museum has said in his " Coins of Ancient Sicily " : " No beginner of the study of Greek art can afford to neglect Sicilian coins, and no traveller in Sicily who cannot appreciate their beauty and historical value deserves the privilege of visiting the island."

It is on the Syracusan coin of Agathocles that the three-legged emblem of Sicily first appears, which, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, has represented Sicily officially. The late Professor

Salinas, director of the National Museum, Palermo, thus defines the arms :

The Trinacria or Triquetra has represented Sicily officially since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Up to that time Sicily was represented heraldically by the arms of Sicily, Aragon, the pali of Aragon, quartered in the Cross of S. Andrew with the Swabian Eagle.

Of this important coin, which now serves Sicily so well, Mr. Hill says :

Agathocles was chosen general with supreme powers in 317 B.C. The coins issued from this time until the date of his invasion of Africa, in 310, do not bear his name; but they are distinguished from all earlier Syracusan issues by the appearance of the three-legged symbol, popularly called triquetra, but more correctly triskeles. This symbol, whatever may be its meaning in other parts of the world, is generally supposed to be the emblem of the three-cornered island, Trinacria, very much as it became in later days the emblem of the Isle of Man, which faces towards three countries—England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Before the seventh century before Christ uncoined metal in the shape of bars and rings of a certain weight were used. Stamping with correct weight is but a step towards the stamping of a section of metal, flattened for the purpose. Here we have a coin or piece of metal adjusted to a certain weight : first, silver ; second, gold ; third, bronze, and a mixture of gold and silver, known as electrum, fourth. This is the order in which the metals made their appearance in Sicilian coinage. Of silver coins of Motya of the Phœnician origin very few are known. On one of the first coins made in Sicily

there is a dolphin, emblem of the sea god ; the word zancle (sickle) is inscribed, and a curve representing the sickle harbour of Messina.

The earliest silver coin of Naxos, the Greek colony close to Taormina, tells us the wine god Dionysius was worshipped in this district, where the vine still flourishes exceedingly. The head of a god twined with his sacred ivy, and a vine twig with bunch of grapes, tells the story of twenty-five centuries ago.

The third earliest known Sicilian coin makes a pun on the name of the place where it was issued. A cock ushers in the day, and Himera, the city where the coin was struck, is the word for Day.

Syracusan coinage begins with designs which are the prototypes of the famous medallions of later times ; on the obverse is a four-horse chariot, the horses walking slowly : the chariot is one of the racing cars with which Sicilians, tyrants, or private individuals gained prizes at the Greek games ; above the chariot is lettering. Then comes a female head on the reverse ; and connoisseurs still argue as to her identity, the Goddess of Victory, the nymph Arethusa of Syracuse's fountain, the Goddess Proserpine, who gathered the hundred-headed narcissus, or Artemis. Perhaps some day a coin will be found where the head is given with a name or symbol which will decide the matter : the joy of coin hunting lies in the fact that at any moment a hitherto unknown type may be found, which puts all experts in the wrong or decides for ever a debated point, and any traveller in Sicily may be the finder of this prize.

Where a collector is not sure of his own knowledge nor satisfied by comparing with Museum specimens, it is best to ask the advice of a director of a Museum, and

in any case, if you think you have a rare example, it should be taken for Museum inspection.

There are, of course, forgeries about. Electrotypes are the chief danger now, but so beautiful must be the work of imitating the great fifth-century coins that the fakes are works of art, and are worth anything between thirty and sixty pounds. Carl Wilhelm Becker's forgery work is the chief pest of coin collectors ; he lived at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and learning his graving at Munich was soon able to pass off his fakes on experts, even inventing some with suitable emblems and inscriptions. His masterpieces are the gold coins of Girgenti, the rarest and the finest coins in the world. When the forger's eyesight weakened he taught his assistant, X. Zindel of Offenburg, to cut his dies ; their whole output was for 340 different coins and medals. The "ageing" of his work was accomplished by enclosing the coins in a metal box with iron filings ; this box was attached to the axle of his carriage, and frequently, in the rascal's diary, appears the entry, "I took my coins for a drive." He melted original coins of low value to obtain the right metal.

Selinus took its name from the selinon (wild celery) plant which grew in the neighbourhood and still grows there : the earliest coins have a formalized representation of a sprig. In the Oracles of the Pythia, Plutarch mentions the selinon plant as the symbol of the city.

There is an enormous preponderance of Syracusan coins over all the others of the Island : from the time of the epoch-making victory of the Greeks, led by Gelo of Syracuse, who was henceforward considered to be the saviour of Greek civilization.

About 440 B.C. signed coins of this period made their appearance. John Ruskin says :

Extreme simplicity, unpretending vigour of work, which claims no admiration either for minuteness or dexterity, and suggests no idea of effort at all ; refusal of extraneous ornament and perfectly arranged disposition of counted masses in sequent order. This is all you have to be pleased with, neither will you ever find in the best Greek art more.

The Syracusan coins of the last third of the fifth century and of the early years of the fourth century B.C. (the finest period of Greek art in Syracuse) are signed by Eumenes and Soson, Evaenetos and Phrygillus, so that the names are known of the men who produced the most beautiful coins in the whole world history of coinage.

It is strange that though we do not know the names of the architects of the great temples, nor the sculptors of the finest statues in the world, yet the names of these makers of superb coins are familiar.

A knuckle-bone appeared on some coins of low value ; this was connected with games of chance and skill, and also for purposes of decoration. Another coin commemorates a feat of horsemanship : a man rides sideways on a galloping horse ; the *anabates*, as he was called, leapt from his steed in full course and ran beside it.

Enough has been said without entering into further details and continuing the history throughout the ages to show that the study of Sicilian coinage is a profound and fascinating occupation, and whether approached from the artistic, the historical-pictorial, or the collector's point of view, it is a revelation of past glories : here the fabric of History is woven on the loom of Art.

CHAPTER VIII

LACE, EMBROIDERY, WEAVING, ETC.

FRANCESCO NARDI asserts in "*Sull' Origine dell' Arte del Ricamo*" that the Italians learned embroidery from the Saracens of Sicily. He brings forward, in support of his theory, the fact that the word "to embroider," both in Italian and Spanish, is derived from the Arabic, and that no similar word exists in any other European language.

The traditions of Flanders also point to an Eastern origin, assigning the introduction of lace-making to the Crusaders and their followers on their return from the Holy Land.

In the privately printed pamphlet on Italian lace by Cav. Antonio Merli, he mentions an account in the Municipal Archives of Ferrara, dated 1469, in which the mending of lace trimmings for 14 pounds, for the canons of the church, is charged for, and in a document of the Sforza family, 1493, the word "*trina*," lace, with bone and bobbin lace, constantly occurs.

Italian and Sicilian points found their way to England. A treaty between Venetians and Henry VII was made in 1507, regulating their sale and quality, for the Italians had given short lengths and gold thread of bad quality. The points of Ragusa were not necessarily made at Ragusa, but were imported

productions of the Greek convents, some being of gold, silver, and silk.

There is much individuality in the old lace of Sicily, because it was nearly always done for use in the maker's own house and for personal wear: thus they had free scope for their own taste, modified only by the customs and traditions of their district. The fashion in their national dress, and the possibilities of good wearing qualities in the decoration of household plenishings, imposed limitations which gave the work extra value to the student of the conditions of life amongst the lace-makers of Sicily.

The woman who is not working for money's sake will be very likely to put into her lace some little ornament which represents a phase or incident in her family history—possibly the fruit whose cultivation has brought prosperity, a flower whose value is sentimental, or a quaint symbol which represents connection with a foreign interest. The innovation will be copied by the next lace-maker in the family, who also is working with no eye on a master, but is pleased to imitate her mother's speciality in stitching or bobbins as she sits in the warm cowshed, or in the *basso* during the winter's evening after the heavy toil of the day is done.

In some cases a crest or device of the reigning family of the district is put in, such as a lion, a hound, or martlet; then the first broadcast of the innovation takes place: a neighbour sees the work and, also interested in the great family, her husband or son perhaps being attached to the household in some capacity, copies the motif and puts it into her own cross-stitch, cutwork, or darned net on which she is working. So we get in Sicily recognizable and stereo-

typed patterns, modified and varied by local influences.

To appreciate the old laces of Sicily one must understand the outlook and environment of the workers. They were surrounded by country objects in their daily life—trees, vines, birds, lambs, flowers, stars; and, moreover, they were preoccupied with many of those objects in order to gain a livelihood. In their lace they placed these forms, so it comes about that the motifs express the world they lived in. No fine temple column or Gothic doorway gives decorative effect to their work; it was the simple things that they used as language to express themselves. Because of their untrained perception and the limitations imposed by their materials we get a square-shaped lady and gentleman in drawn thread-work quite as tall as their castle tower, a stag with regulation horns, but with twists beyond all possibility of animal endurance—just as a child would draw it—and a lion or peacock who is nothing—is not heraldic because he comes straight from the coat-of-arms of the great family of the district.

The darned net or fillet, which of the same period in France would show gallants, fine ladies, cupids, and the inevitable Louis bow of ribbon, because it was made under the directions of the merchant for use of court ladies, in Sicily would have archaic patterns, lettering, and a date perhaps, while the knights and fair ladies would be reminiscent of the Paladins of Charlemagne, beloved on the popular marionette stage, or they would be brides and bridegrooms with button heads, stiff limbs, and outstanding doublets and skirts, because the needlework was so often for the marriage *corbello* of the daughter of the house.

The heraldic lions rampant, couchant, regardant, and dansetti would adorn the borders, in the same way as they appear on the *point scritti* embroidery.

Signora Ricci describes the *punto saraceno*, which is also called *punto ivorio*, or more familiarly *piccolo punto*, little stitch, undoubtedly brought to Sicily during the Saracen occupation :

This lace is composed entirely of a double-knot stitch drawn very lightly together—perhaps more aptly described as a double loop-stitch—which is found in no other Italian lace. . . . It suggests much more the geometrical problems met with in Arab art, and the colouring is particularly foreign, generally of a brown thread or of silk of the brightest tints.

Elaborate cutwork was used to decorate those parts of the shirts or chemisettes of the women in geometric designs round the square opening of the neck, and a 3- or 4-inch bar of it, on the low shoulder line, where the pleats of the sleeve fullness were attached. Sometimes a further lace ornament was placed across the breast, just as the smocking was continued in our own old English linen smocks. On this lower panel of needlework figures or animals would probably be worked, and the pleats of fullness for the skirt would be attached to the lower edge, as in the sleeve. The cuffs would also have lace ornaments and decoration of knots in pattern. Embroidery and lace work were the expression of beauty and simple luxury by the Sicilian lace-worker, who, living far from a town, could only provide herself with this delight by her own diligence ; the influence of her friends occupied in the same way would act as incentive.

In nearly every cottage now one sees the lace and embroidery frame; women sew as they chatter to their friends, neighbours bring their chairs and join the group, after work in the fields, water-carrying, laundry, and other tasks are done. Sometimes a roomy house will accommodate thirty or forty girls, presided over by a head man or woman, who gives out materials and designs, according to shop or private orders for the work.

Twenty-five years ago the only occupation of the children of Taormina, and their only way of obtaining a few *soldi*, was by begging. Visitors were pestered beyond endurance. Then a Society for relieving without pauperising the poor was founded, and Miss Hill appointed to look after the outdoor relief. So it was that she gathered together three or four girls and had them taught some of the simple lace stitches of South Italy.

They took to the work like ducks to water, the old instincts being aroused; their skill may be inherited from their nimble-fingered ancestors. It may have been these ancestors who had made the laces of Ragusa, with those of Genoa on the mainland, which became the subject of a treaty between the Venetians and Henry VII in 1507.

So successful were the lessons organized by Miss Hill that soon women and girls clamoured to be taught, and skilful pupils initiated their own home circle, selling the result of their labours to numerous shopkeepers in the neighbourhood, or being employed by them to execute special orders.

From the first Miss Hill had each worker taught to begin and finish the article, however simple or however intricate; so that the old craftsman's pride

in the whole piece is fostered and originality encouraged : no middle man has a chance of diminishing price and speeding-up labour by setting workers on to a single section and joining afterwards. Thus a worker can sell her finished work direct if she cares to.

At first the learners cut out and decorated small d'oyleys or mats, so that a quick result should encourage the beginner ; now, elaborate table-covers of cut and drawn thread-work, coverlets with the old totem patterns of the aborigines, blue or black stitchings of the Renaissance times. *Punto scritto*, copied from the pictures of Raphael or Morone, have been faithfully reproduced from their portraits by counting every stitch.

Her efforts had the desired effect of banishing the begging children and enriching the cottage homes, so that abject poverty is now unknown in Taormina.

But for many years it was a puzzle as to how she should bridge those five months when Taormina is deserted by tourists on account of the heat. At last this difficulty has been overcome by the obtaining of large permanently recurring orders from merchants in the great cities in the United States, and now the dull months are fully occupied, and in the improved condition of the cottages in Taormina and other towns in Sicily, Miss Hill has the satisfaction of seeing the tangible result of her quarter of a century of labour.

Pillow lace, though generally for home use, was sometimes made to a small extent for sale, and was handled by the colporteurs of the day—tradition has it that they paid in kind, giving a pear, an apple, or a



SICILIAN EMBROIDERY OF GOLD THREAD ENRICHED WITH CONAL BEADS

root of fennel in exchange for lace. In the streets and piazzas at Randazzo and other districts one sees women and girls working at lace pillows, their fingers moving at lightning speed, and no pricked pattern required to aid their memories. The women who perform this delicate work have probably been labouring in the fields, washing, carrying the water-filled amphoræ on their heads, and using hoe and bill-hook on the land, but their fingers, though roughened, still retain their sensibility of touch.

The gold and silver laces of Sicily are unusually fine, and as one examines the patterns and cutworks in the unyielding metal threads, one wonders at the skill of the old workers.

Broad examples, sometimes 8 or 10 inches wide, are seen on the old peasants' dresses, sewn in hoops round the wide skirts, with fine effect; narrow laces adorn the velvet head bows, while gold-thread embroidery and gold fringe carry out the rich effect. One is occasionally lucky in finding a fragment of gold or silver lace decorated with coral beads in the manner of Trapani work. This mode is very rare; the only fine example I have ever seen is used as an edging for a splendid square divan covering of brocade in the great drawing-room of the Trabia Butera Palace, on the Marina at Palermo. Eight inches wide, the silver lace has masses of coral beads sewn on to emphasize the pattern, and there are more than a dozen yards of this rich edging, so suitably weighted to keep the cover in place.

The coral-bead embroideries of Sicily are very characteristic, the earliest I have noted being the vestments of the fifteenth century at the cathedrals of Girgenti and of Cefalù. In each case the ground is thick corded silk; a close scroll and foliage pattern is

embroidered all over in silver thread, with outline in small coral beads and a few masses on leaf devices. The placing of the beads in outline is evidently an earlier method than the using of the beads in compact mass for the calyces of flowers or seeds of fruit, shown in a fine example, probably of the seventeenth century, at the Villa Scalea and on the altar frontal, formerly in the Church of the Olivella at Palermo, now in the National Museum. This latter is 10 feet long, and has a balustrade, with vases in perspective; a fountain is in the centre. The vases are of gold, probably silver-gilt, embossed and engraved; conventional flowers and foliage, entirely embroidered in coral, grow in each vase. The balustrading is also in coral, as well as the massive Corinthian pillars at each end. The fountain is of coral beads; silver threads simulate the water.

Seed-pearl embroidery is found of much earlier date. Of the twelfth century is the magnificent altar frontal of Palermo Cathedral, with raised work formed by masses of seed pearls, and some medallions of enamel. This needlework was taken from the tomb of Queen Constance, where it formed part of her robes.

Elaborate pearl embroidery enriches the velvet horse trappings of the Viceroy Marquis di Villena, given to the National Museum, Palermo, by King Victor Emmanuel II in 1876. The enamelled stirrups and medallions are very beautiful, heraldry in correct colouring being the subject. The harness, 8-inch tassels, and fringe of blue, gold, green, and purple silk, of sixteenth-century Spanish work, show signs of Oriental influence.

The history of these trappings tells of their having been pawned to the Municipal Bank when, in 1609,



CHASUBLE. FLOWERS EMBROIDERED IN COLOURED SILKS ON
GROUND OF GOLD THREAD LAID DOWN ON EMBOSSED CARTON.
18TH CENTURY. IN THE MUSEO NATIONALE, PALERMO



ALTAR FRONTAL FROM THE CHURCH OF OVIELLA, PALERMO.
WORKED IN GOLD THREAD AND CORAL BEADS. PILLAR,
36½INS. HIGH. VASES SILVER, GILT AND EMBOSSED. 17TH
CENTURY

Villena needed money to ransom his son from the Turks, *and there is a large sum still owing on it.*

In 1858 the Museum was ordered to send it to the Capo di Monte Palace at Naples, but it was later restored to Palermo. In the same room are the wonderful embroideries on church vestments executed by Fra Giacinto Donato, a Dominican of Ascoli, and his school in 1674. These are probably unequalled in beauty of workmanship in their class, though those given by Pope Sixtus IV to the Convent of S. Francesco are wonderfully fine. The Ascoli embroideries nearly always have designs of fruit in ripest, richest colouring, the groundwork is entirely in gold thread ; no portion of material shows, and waves and various undulations are obtained by the embossed carton padding. Apples in russet and gold silk, in natural size ; peaches, creamy and rose ; pomegranates, with red seeds ; apricots, nespoli, and above all, grapes in jade and yellow, purple, dimmed only with the grey bloom, perfectly rendered ; their leaves and tendrils completing an exquisite decoration for chasuble, and on the hoods of copes and the orpheries.

Narrow gold laces trim the church vestments after the sixteenth century, but not before ; while gold and silver galons and metal-woven ribbons also appear at this time.

Examples of old ribbons are interesting quarry for the collector ; a few inches are sufficient for a cabinet specimen, and will often give an idea of pattern or colour combination for embroidery. The waved edge, the silk or metal picot, enhance the beauty, while patterned grounds of pale yellow, white, or green are enriched with gold, rose, or silver arabesques.

The fringes of Sicily, used with the rich woven

stuffs, are of very unusual beauty, and were always made specially for the damask or brocade that they were to adorn.

The woollen tassels on mule and ox harness require great skill ; they are of the same type as the silken ornaments, but of the humbler material. One need only note the 12-inch plaiting and knotting of a palm leaf at Easter time to see how men, women, and children delight in such intricacies. Even the mules and miniature Sardinian donkeys wear these trophies of skill, which are, after all, but a popular manifestation of fringe and tassel technique.

Some of the harness decorations are handed down from father to son, and are very Oriental in taste and colouring. The animals are decorated differently in different neighbourhoods. In Syracuse a feather, ostrich or pheasant, half a yard high, fits into a brass holder between the ears of the animal, and stands erect. In Catania there is an upright wool and horn-covered erection, a yard high, on the back of the animal, with a great bunch of scarlet, green, and yellow feathers at the top. One sees its prototype in the head ornaments of the horses in the Mogul paintings of the school of Shah Jehan, 1640, in the Agra and Delhi collections recently purchased by the National Art Collections Fund and other donors.

A great bunch of feathers also decorates the horse's head : they are in nowise put there to ward off flies or for any other useful purpose, but simply for show and glory in the colour and decoration. Great wool tassels, plaitings, and ropes in scarlet worsted are also placed in conspicuous places on the harness. Near Messina the animals are undecorated, and the carts, though carved simply, have scarcely any painted



RIBBONS AND GALONS, WOVEN IN GOLD, SILVER, AND COLOURED SILKS; PLAIN, WAVED OR PICOT EDGES, 18TH CENTURY. IN THE MUSEO NAZIONALE, PALERMO



SAMPLER WORKED IN COLOURED SILKS DATED 1830. TABLE CLOTH, LINEN, WITH FRINGED BORDER, EMBROIDERED IN RED SILK AND GOLD THREAD. 16TH CENTURY

ornament. Sicilian carrettas are described in Chapter IX.

Where the art of weaving is familiar, dyeing is generally understood, and with flax, hemp, and silk growing on the Island, it is natural that carpets should claim the attention of the industrialists. Unlike the natives of the Abruzzi and neighbouring Sardinia, Sicily has not yet evolved special native patterns, and at present the well-knotted loom work exploits Persian and Arab designs almost exclusively. Amongst those I saw, on the looms at Palermo, one or two for exhibition purposes gave pictorial incidents in the history of Sicily, but the old animal totems of the original inhabitants and the heraldic patterns of Norman times were not drawn upon for the designs. This is regrettable, the work itself being extremely well done.

Akin to the thread twisting of bobbin lace is the straw-plaiting, which is still done in Sicily to a small extent, together with basket-weaving, of which good examples of all the plaited objects of household use are shown in the Ethnological Museum at Palermo; even the plates of weighing scales are of plaited palm leaves, and the charcoal fans are ubiquitous all over the Island. Baskets of every description, from delicate straw plait to heavy, hard-wearing receptacles for fish, vegetables, fruit, and fodder, are of willow wands.

The netting of the fisherman is very small and requires an enormous amount of labour to make and keep it in order. It is made of fine string, much strengthened where extra grip is required. The mesh of the sardine nets is almost as fine as a lady's veil; the equipment is extremely valuable. Very strong, but very thick and coarse, are the nets used beneath

country carts, where in huge pockets of elaborately knotted rope, fodder and other burdens are securely placed, giving extra accommodation without much weight.

Of the knitting in Sicily there are very fine old examples occasionally to be met with in bags, purses, vests of coloured silk with fine patterns, and whole costumes. The present-day knitting of the cottagers is chiefly confined to the stockings and socks of the family.

The lace-trimmed albs and surplices belonging to the Cathedral of Catania are remarkable, not only in quality but in quantity, and in fine condition. Neat piles are stowed in drawers in the sacristy, spotless from the hands of the laundress, every thread in order. Patterns are separated; of this fine design of the seventeenth century there are five in number, matching for celebrant and attendant priests; of that darned netting, with red cloth beneath, showing the motif of wheat-ear and vine-leaf to perfection, there are six in number, with correct colouring beneath.

The drawn-thread patterns are exceptional, 10 to 12 inches wide, 15 to 18 inches for the sleeves, *œil de Perdrix*, a pointed flame design, and other cutworks, characteristic of the period. I counted ten different varieties of stitching in a single piece.

Then come embroidered nets, reminiscent of the Spanish occupation of Sicily, for Spain has always excelled in this type, from the days when coloured silks were used sparingly on hand-made black net ground, up to the time when blonde laces were beloved of the Empress Eugénie, and by her example (a graceful and bizarre dresser) became the fashion all over Europe.

The embroidered nets of S. Agatha's attendant

priests are of flax, but the mesh varies: sometimes the interstices are square, resembling the threads passed to and fro without knotting, of the ground of *buratto*; sometimes hexagonal, the Argentan form, and the embroidered patterns vary from a rich pomegranate and bird design, inspired, one might think, by Oriental models, to a light and graceful motif, with the inevitable ribbon bows of Louis Seize.

Vases banked high with tulip and rose, baskets in lightest openwork pattern, appear in ordered piles and perfect condition.

Sometimes a special story is attached to a fine specimen—here is the wedding dress of a bride, now dedicated for the use of the church; here a short surplice made entirely of pillow lace, over 2000 bobbins being needed to execute the pattern. It must be remembered that such lace-trimmed garments are used only on special occasions, perhaps once or twice a year.

There was a great deal of silk bobbin lace, of geometric design, such as we call Maltese lace, though made in many parts besides Malta (geographical names are always misleading). It was in the ordinary cream silk, other examples in a deeper colour, and one specimen in the rich and unusual gold-thread ground, with pattern of the ordinary flax.

It was interesting to see that one of the finest examples of lace was modern, and very pleasant to think that there are hands which have not lost the old cunning. On a groundwork of very fine silk bobbin lace of cream colour, where many elaborate cutworks were used, there were seven inch-long medallions of the finest white embroidery done in silk thread, the motifs showing the emblems of the Passion, the ladder,

nails, scourge, etc., being worked with restrained good taste and in accordance with old examples.

Where such fine specimens of lace are found in the churches it may well be imagined that privately owned pieces exist, and judging by those displayed in the curio shops it is easier to find interesting and useful old laces in Sicily than in other countries.

Family hoards are continually coming into the market through death and dispersal of personal effects, and if poverty threatens, a parcel of lace is the first treasure to be disposed of, as its disappearance is not marked by neighbours. The household linen cupboard may also be gradually depleted without publicity.

Towels with the old *punto a groppo* of South Italy and Sicily may sometimes be found, and though the long fringe may have worn thin it is still a collector's treasure.

At Randazzo is preserved at the Cathedral a magnificent altar frontal of needlework done by the "ladies of the congregation" in the first half of the sixteenth century. Finely raised gold thread work with seed pearls varying in size from a grain of mustard seed to that of a pea make this unique specimen of laborious devotion a very valuable treasure, and an almost unique example of lay production instead of the usual monasterial work.

Amongst the superb vestments belonging to the Cathedral of Monreale there are none more beautiful than the chasubles, which are of gold net elaborately embroidered with pure gold sequins varying in size, and motifs in thickly padded and raised gold thread.

There is a whole suite of this costly net, which is of eighteenth-century Sicilian workmanship. The



GOLD THREAD EMBROIDERY ON WHITE SILK. TWO EXAMPLES OF FRINGED PUNTO A GROPPLO. PUNTO DI MILANO FLAX THREAD MOTIFS ON GOLD THREAD GROUND. ALL OF THE 18TH CENTURY

Cardinal's hat and tassels with his heraldry in correct colouring form part of the design.

They were given by the Archbishop of Monreale. The only other examples of this type that I saw in Sicily were in the Treasury of S. Agatha at Catania.

In a very fine example of baroque design the flower pattern is worked in natural colours on rose brocade ; seed pearls are used with lovely effect for the centres or calyces ; white, grey, and mauve iris are amongst the tulip, lily, and blush-rose motifs : gold lace edges this set of vestments, which are dated 1690.

A similar set in the Treasury of Monreale are of white brocade, the conventional arabesques of gold thread mingled with flower patterns of natural size and colouring ; there are gold sequins which accentuate the lines here and there : this set is also of the late seventeenth century.

The superb rose silk copes worn on the festal days of martyred saints at S. Agatha at Catania are embroidered in silver ; the knotted fringe which borders the hood is extremely rich : there are ten such copes, all of the same pattern. Yellow corded silk with the same silver sprigs and borders form another splendid suite.

Five very fine white and gold embroidered chasubles have on them the arms of Cardinal Corada Maria Deodalo : the hat and green tassels with the heraldry of the Cardinal are on each vestment.

There is a complete set of black vestments, finely embroidered in gold, for use on Good Friday.

The copes presented by Napoleon are splendidly embroidered in gold, in a sprigged pattern, as one would expect at this period of *semé* designs.

In 1735 seventeen rose red copes were presented.

The stuff, watered in the Sicilian manner, was woven in Catania: it is interesting to see this perfect example of the industry which is now almost extinct.

A very fine green moiré shot with silver is the background for another set of twelve copes; others are shot gold and rose. Gold net thickly embroidered and with raised edging, in the manner of the Monreale vestments of the same date, show the arms of Cardinal Astalio.

Thirty-five thousand lire are expended each year in keeping in order this rich store of precious fabrics and embroideries at S. Agatha's.

Weaving and distaff work in Sicily has always existed, not only as peasant work, but also as the serious occupation of the upper classes. In singing the glory of Helen come the words in the eighteenth Idyl of Theocritus, "No other in her basket of wool winds forth such goodly work, and none cuts out from between the mighty beams a closer warp than that her shuttle weaves in the carven loom." Again, "Achæan women, as they card the soft wool about their knees, shall sing at eventide." Then there is the gracious little piece of verse which accompanied the present of a distaff brought by Theocritus from Syracuse to Theugenis, the wife of his friend Nicias, the physician of Miletus. I quote the prose translation by Andrew Lang:

O distaff, thou friend of them that spin, gift of grey-eyed Athene to dames whose hearts are set on housewifery; come, boldly come with me to the bright city of Neleus, where the shrine of the Cyprian is green 'neath its roof of delicate rushes. . . . And thee, distaff, thou child of fair carven ivory, I will give into the hands of the wife of Nicias; with her

shalt thou fashion many a thing, garments for men, and much rippling raiment that women wear.

The Normans found the silk industry flourishing, for it had thriven under Saracenic rule ; mulberry groves had been planted in the rich, but malarious, plain of Catania and elsewhere on the Island, and the silk-worm culture, modelled on the Eastern methods, furnished material for the fine textiles of which we may still see relics patterned with Arabic caligraphy.

In the Palazzo of the Conte Mazzarini at Palermo there are to be seen some of the finest examples of early Sicilian woven hangings in existence. It was impossible to note in detail the patterns of the various examples, but happily I have been able to find in England a few examples of the rare Arabo-Sicilian weaving to assist my study.

No wonder that artists produced strange forms when they were called upon to depict such abstractions as meekness, obedience, and humility instead of the full and glorious beauty of Greece or the caligraphy, animals and floral forms of the Saracen. After the Byzantine come designs purely European in feeling, traceable to Spanish, Italian, or French influence, according to fashion and the demands of the occupier of the Island at the moment.

Fragments of the priceless weaves of early Sicilian make whose patterns are of entirely Saracenic origin are now impossible to find ; they are best kept between glass, as are the examples in the Cathedral of Palermo, which are part of the death robes of Constance, wife of King William, whose pearl-sewn embroidery is mentioned above.

Sicilian peasants not only made the rich silken weaves for church use and for their own elaborate

sixteenth-century peasant dresses, but also the cloth for petticoats, the rough friezes for men's clothes, and the flax cloths for household linen and for underwear.

They obtained wool from the flocks for the frieze; hemp and flax were cultivated in their own fields, harvested, soaked, spun, dyed, and woven with their own hands; then their own expert fingers threw the shuttle so that the cloth would bear patterns according to their fancy. As final stage came their home-made decoration, drawn thread at the hems, open and cut-works to join the seams, *scritto* embroidery of animals and human figures, which make a much more characteristically Sicilian decoration than flower forms. Thus we have the whole tale of woven and twisted threads from the seed of flax or cocoon of silk to the finished garment.

PEASANT DRESS

The finest examples of Sicilian peasant dresses that I have examined are owned by Princess Ganci, who has rich silk brocade skirts in voluminous folds, six or more yards in width. Sometimes these skirts are garnished with double rows of 10 or 12 inch gold and silver lace, sometimes with bands of embroidery on the material. One especially notable example was of deep rose gros grain silk. The 7-yard wide skirt had a border 20 inches deep all round, worked closely with gold thread; the bodice was of purple velvet. A short turquoise blue silk cape for the head and shoulders was trimmed with silver lace, and a many-looped bow of rose velvet, edged with deep gold fringe, was for the head. A jewelled breast ornament and long ear-rings of gold, pearls, and enamel completed the dress.



SICILIAN EMBROIDERY IN LINEN *POINT ECRIT*, ON RED SILK GROUND

There are also fine specimens of peasant dress of men and women from different districts, complete with all accessories, such as repoussé girdles and buckles, beads, ear-rings, combs and pins at the National and Ethnological Museums at Palermo, and there are others in private collections.

When one wonders how the peasant class of Sicily, who have little of this world's goods, should have such rich costumes, we are answered thus—they have always owned these dresses; they descend from mother to daughter from the sixteenth century: one sees sometimes a pattern of brocade or embroidery which is exactly the wear of the well-to-do burgher of that period. The weaving was done in the country, silk cultivation is a native industry, lace-making, too, and embroidery is the natural work of every Italian and Sicilian woman. Handsome silk ribbons, galons, and tassels were as easy for the native of Sicily to make as a daisy-chain to a child. When one comes to analyse the make-up of these gorgeous peasant dresses we find that all their costly embellishments were peasant arts.

The embroidered linen and cambric chemisettes were the work of the wearers; women who lived far away from a town afforded themselves the luxury of adorning themselves with what was within their own power to achieve, and what mondaine of Paris can have more than delicate lace and embroidery?

That the rich gold and coloured silk work on an old peasant costume resembled more the solid church embroideries than the more attenuated patterns of everyday wear was perfectly natural. The festa dress would be likely to have every effort of richness and industry put into its adornment, and it is probable that sometimes a Chiaramonte or some other wealthy

noble, whose riches and extravagance of Renaissance times can only be guessed at now, might order fine costumes for his dependants on a marriage or other special occasion, and the dress, stiff with velvet or brocade and rich embroidery, would be handed down.

Early pictures of feasts and the attendants of nobles suggest that rich effect was often inspired by a wealthy landowner prince, when his vassals attended on him. At the Palazzo Butera are preserved superb dresses of the running footmen and other attendants of the seventeenth-century household.

The apron, generally, but not always, an accompaniment of the old peasant dress, shows that the practical owner thought of the wear and tear, and used this useful guard as an excuse for more colour and richer effect. The cape and movable sleeves, or those which were loose and would roll up, were another practical feature, and the stout bust and solid bodice corset, made of thick material, would be necessary for the worker, though finest lace might trim the chemisette above. The jewellery, varying in type according to district, as the dress does also, but essential as a part of the dress, is treated in its place.

As to the special types in special districts, in Modica, for example, in the present day, where native dress lingers longest, the women wear little short cloaks of blue with velvet bands. At Randazzo I have seen them in these same cloaks, but of white frieze, home woven; they wear them over their heads like the shawls of Girgenti. The dresses have very full skirts and sleeves and are worn rather long: with these they wear very large gold beads and ear-rings of filigree. The men wear brown frieze, also home woven and dyed, and the coats open to show a white



PEASANT'S DRESS, PALERMO, EMBROIDERED SILK
SKIRT, WITH KEY PATTERN, LACE APRON, RICH
VELVET BODICE EMBROIDERED WITH GOLD THREAD,
MANTLE OF WHITE EMBROIDERED FRIEZE, SILVER
GIRDLE, AMETHYST AND PEARL EARRINGS, CHAIN
AND PENDANT



SICILIAN EMBROIDERY IN RED, BROWN AND GREEN. ARCHAIC
DESIGN OF BUILDING WITH SARACENIC CASTELLATIONS

Studio

linen shirt pleated finely. Their caps are of the stocking variety, and they wear top-boots, as do the men of Piano dei Greci, who, descended from an Albanian colony, still wear the Albanian dress.

At Aderno one sees the beautiful shawls with long fringes which remain to Sicily from the Spanish occupation: at this town a miracle play is still performed at Easter outside the church, and fine brocade and cashmere shawls of lavender, lemon, and rose may be seen. The men wear black cloaks with silver fastenings. The men's national costume of Taormina is seldom seen: it consists of a black frieze Eton jacket and tight knee-breeches of rough pale blue cloth; the legs are swathed and the feet literally laced into a bit of hide with the hair left on. The women generally wear handsome black shawls with beautiful fringe.

It is almost impossible now to find one of the old Sicilian shawls, whose elaborate patterns on white or dull orange grounds make such lovely colour notes in the street on festa days. The gaudy manufactures of Paisley or Milan sold at the shops at Palermo, Syracuse, or Taormina unfortunately please the modern Sicilian, and the cheap price lures them to buy these inartistic goods rather than the more costly genuine Sicilian shawls. Unfortunately, cunning buyers have purchased the old supplies, and whenever an exquisite example of antique pattern comes into the market the dealers can easily place it.

What is always known as Sicilian work in England is the close and evenly done cross-stitch in brilliant red rose and more rarely green; it is usually found in 4 to 8 inch wide strips and often has a silk fringe at the edge. The patterns are generally the same

heraldic emblems, dragons, peacocks, lions, stags, which are found on the lace, the wood-carving, sculptured capitals, and the majolicas of the period. Rich colouring is characteristically Sicilian, and the further south one penetrates the more varied one finds the colours. The dyeing of silk, flax and woollen stuffs was done in various parts of the Island and the vegetable dyes prepared by the peasants. Dyers' broom is still a commercial article, and the madder dye of *Rubia tinctoria* is still used. The dyeing industry survives to a very small extent near Taormina, where the water is specially suitable.

ALTAR FRONTAL

The most remarkable piece of needlework I have seen in Sicily—I had almost written, I have ever seen anywhere—is the altar frontal once belonging to S. Gregorio, a church built on the site of a temple of Jove at Messina. Its spiral tower was one of the landmarks in the town from land and sea; thirteenth-century mosaics adorned its walls; the Gothic monastery adjoined; now only a few treasures preserved in the Museum show us the quality of the treasures which were destroyed in the earthquake in 1908.

The frontal measures 8 feet 6 inches by 4 feet 2 inches and is worked entirely with gold thread in high relief, enriched with motifs of carved mother-of-pearl inlaid with coral, tortoise-shell, and garnet beads, seed pearls, etc.

It is labelled *Paleotto da S. Gregorio*; its date is given as 1540 to 1550. The Director, Cav. Professor Miraglia, gave me the few facts which are known of this magnificent example of characteristic Sicilian

work in the best period. It was made in the Monastery of S. Gregorio (it will be remembered that the word "monastery" in Sicily is correctly used with its original significance for nuns or monks). There are three groups, representing scenes in the life of Joseph. In the central group he is seated on a throne of carved mother-of-pearl; a draped curtain behind him is of the same material, inlaid with coral; the background is in gold thread, showing doorways, pillars, and a corridor in perspective. Joseph and his brethren have faces, arms, hands, and legs modelled in wax; their garments, wrought in gold thread and seed pearls, stand out in bold relief, as the clothing in our stump-work pictures. Some of the figures measure 8 inches; dogs in mother-of-pearl are included in the group, standing on a carpet entirely of coral beads in patterns.

On the left, Joseph in the coat of many colours, wrought entirely in coral and garnet beads, with a bordering of gold thread, is about to step into a most realistic pit, made of a rope-like wall of seed pearls, lined with tortoise-shell, to give the required depth and blackness.

The merchants stand round in pearl and gold turbans, the brethren in simpler drapery; a negro behind has a solid tortoise-shell carved face and hands, and holds a camel, also in tortoise-shell, with fur of tasselled gold thread and a very bushy tail. The ground is all of gold thread, flat but patterned by means of the carton beneath.

On the right is a superb group, Jacob in the centre, the old man's face and head finely modelled, his flowing garments and staff outstanding in gold and seed pearls; before him stand four of the brethren,

evidently asking for Benjamin—a boy figure in a short garment, entirely in seed pearls. Jacob is weeping.

Beneath the groups are arabesques and birds with outspread wings raised in high relief—they are raised 1 inch to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches; the padding is of plaster covered with coarse linen. The arabesques and birds lie on a flat-patterned ground of gold thread and are of coral and garnet beads, gold thread, and seed pearls.

So minute is the work that one can count the coins in the hands of Reuben as he receives the payment for the betrayal. They are gold coins stamped, and are the size of a pea. There is a splendid 2-inch wide frame of highly raised rope pattern, the twisted strands being of seed pearls and coral.

CHAPTER IX

FURNITURE, WOOD-CARVING, PRESEPE FIGURES, PRINTS,
WAX, BRASS, IRON, INTARSIA PICTURES

THE domestic furniture of Sicily follows the modes of other countries in form, but at the same time has some very distinctive features which make it quite unmistakably Sicilian. Sicilian joiners and cabinet-makers, inlay workers and carvers, have always been so clever that they have made in the Island furniture which we associate with Louis XVI, the Chippendale type or the simpler Greek style associated with the first Empire period, from drawings or imported models.

Before the thirteenth century one can only speak of furniture with reference to historical events and influences.

During the age of monasteries, chivalry, and incessant warfare, the castles of the nobles had some rich pieces of furniture and valuable possessions, but not many : old miniature paintings on MSS. of the fourteenth century show the Knight and his lady seated, but attendants standing or sitting on the floor.

A few relics remain : S. Peter's chair, overlaid with ivory plaques and bound together with iron : it has a solid front and arms ; a chair kept in the Treasury of S. Mark's at Venice, which originally came from Constantinople ; another I have seen at the Archbishop's palace at Ravenna

Beds were like the couches of the early Greeks or straw-covered benches in a recess; the household plenishings were of the scantiest. Dante says, "A man and his wife ate off the same plate: there were no wood-handled knives" (each man would use his own cutting implement, and forks were not invented till long after), "not more than one or two drinking cups; a servant held a torch at supper."

The pride of men at that time was to be well provided with arms and horses, and in Sicily and South Italy to have lofty look-out towers and high castles. Safety first was their motto, but fourteenth-century frugality soon changed to the sumptuous Renaissance modes, when everything exquisite in furniture and hangings was used.

Then came in the carved chests for storing rich clothing, the marriage cassones, with coats of arms in gilt gesso or *pastiglia*. There were enormous numbers of these carved or painted chests made, for they were used for many purposes: for storing clothes, for packing, as in a trunk for a journey, cushioned, for seats and sometimes as a bed. In old paintings one sees them placed beside a bed and at the bottom of a bed. In old inventories, where they are carefully enumerated, a well-to-do citizen will own many, from fifteen to fifty.

It is not difficult to purchase in Sicily a cassone in fair condition, and as the decoration is so varied, from oak, walnut, or chestnut carving to painting and gilt gesso, one may suit the more severe English taste if desired.

Again, with early furniture, there is the linen cupboard, from monastery or convent, or the larger enclosed cupboard richly carved, which has been used



CARVED WOOD CHOIR STALLS AT THE CONVENT OF BENEDETTINI, CATANIA

Galiffi Crupi



CASSONE WITH ARABESQUE ORNAMENT IN GILT GESSO. ITALIAN. 15TH CENTURY
2 FT. 5 INS. HIGH

Victoria and Albert Museum

in a sacristy for holding vestments. Sometimes such pieces may be seen *in situ* and bought then and there, sometimes one finds an example in a backyard or carpenter's oddment store : judicious inquiries set on foot may result in a happy find. To this period belong the heavy wooden stool and the trestle table, as in the England of Elizabethan times, and, like the British examples, there will be practically no decoration on either bench or table except in the beauty of its own firm and stable make.

The chairs of this time may be of the folding pattern, like our folding chair of the fourteenth century, or the high-backed ecclesiastical chair, richly carved, with Gothic ornament and claw feet, or possibly a whole lion or leopard borrowed from the East.

Such a chair will be much raised from the ground, and will have had a stool, but it is very unlikely that the collector will be able to find that this addition is extant.

There were barrel-shaped armchairs ; such are called *Sedia Dantesca* ; they were probably first made in Dante's time and the type has persisted. Sometimes they have intarsia decorations, sometimes inlay of ivory ; the seats are of leather or brocade.

At this time were made many of the fine cathedral choir stalls in Sicily, usually with carving on the arms and below, with fine intarsia on the backs and rich mouldings and cornices ; the wood is generally walnut. The choir stalls are specially fine at the Cathedral at Syracuse ; at the church of S. Francis of Assisi at San Dominico ; at Taormina, where they are in the chapel behind the altar ; at the Cathedral at Catania, where the whole history of S. Agatha is displayed ; and at S. Nicola at Catania. At Palermo Cathedral

there is a finely carved archbishop's chair with Gothic canopy.

The priedieu is to be found amongst the early examples of domestic furniture in Sicily. Each specimen is different : some have high, richly carved backs with Gothic ornament, others plain panels and a drawer beneath the kneeling-box, to hold books of devotion.

One I saw would hold several people, and was almost a chapel in itself ; possibly there was no private chapel in the house, and the master summoned his children to pray with him. A priedieu was generally at the bed side, and sometimes, as in a picture, I found the chair matched the bed panelling and other embellishments, having probably been made at the same time by the same craftsman.

I have not been able to find that tapestry looms were ever set up on the Island, but there is a good deal of Flemish, French, Spanish, and Italian tapestry in the Sicilian palaces of the present day. The series of Florentine tapestries on the staircase and corridor of the Villa Malfitano are specially fine.

In the sixteenth century, beauty-loving Sicilians enjoyed to the full the opportunities which the Renaissance in all the arts in Italy gave them, of making and acquiring fine furniture and other articles for domestic use. Leonardo da Vinci and Raffaello may be said to have led the way, and from henceforth the simplicity of the Gothic taste was banished. Leo X, a member of that remarkable and powerful Medici family, was Pope, and under his patronage and with the co-operation of reigning dukes and princes, artists were given encouragement and scope for the employment of their talents.

Living so much out of doors in his lovely Island, the Sicilian was less dependent on the comforts of small rooms to which we in our cold climate become attached. The buffet made its appearance in Sicily at this time, richly carved, as shelves were needed for the display of the silver vessels of Trapani and the majolicas of Caltagirone and Palermo, or the imported examples from Naples and Urbino. The chest of walnut or chestnut wood, either painted or carved with scrolls, became still more elaborate; tables were made, but not of the old trestle type. Carved and pierced supports and tops of wood or marble intarsia made their appearance.

Gilded "wall tables," as they were called, with tops of porphyry, red marble, or verde antique, were used for holding ornaments, and the gold of the wooden supports being superimposed on red was wonderfully rich. In old specimens one sees this red groundwork showing through in consequence of time and wear, and the effect is most harmonious.

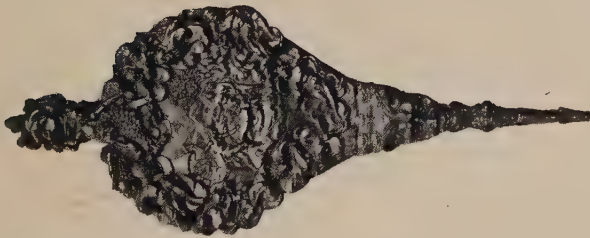
One sees in Sicily a great deal of old lacquer; a pair of Chinese panelled encoignures, marble topped, at the Villa Scalea stand out in my memory as gems, and many interesting pieces of fine pseudo-Chinese lacquer furniture in the Favorita, where all the walls are painted with bamboo and mandarins.

This is the period when small domestic pieces first appear, such as bellows, beautifully carved; a collector is lucky if he can secure a pair. In the Magniac Collection, which was dispersed in 1892, a pair of finely carved Venetian bellows was sold for 455 guineas. Wall brackets also came in at this time to hold the costly and richly coloured drug or spice jars, or the statuettes of antique Greek terra-cotta or marble;

carved and gilded candlesticks and lanterns are also of this period.

The enrichment of woodwork by means of inlaying, though always done to some extent (for ivories were used as ornament since the sixth century before Christ), began to be much more used in Sicily at this Renaissance time, and as a curious result of the more frequent demand, the craftsmen often substituted bone of fine quality for ivory, which was not easy to obtain. The word Tarsia or Intarsia, as the inlaying is called in Sicily, is derived from the Carthusian monks who were specially apt in this work. Pictures with elaborate effects in perspective were made by inlaying various woods and utilizing the way of the grain, and variations of colour, even slight staining, seem to have been done, and banding, bordering, and elaborately depicted twists and plaited effects were obtained, such as one sees in perfection in the choir stalls and frontal chests. The Sicilian craftsman retains the Greek quality of producing exquisite effect with simple material. A single panel of intarsia or carved wood can often be picked up for a few lire and gives one a great opportunity for working up in England.

The introduction of inlay of precious and semi-precious stones also belongs to the sixteenth century in Sicily, and whether one approves or not, the matter deserves detailed mention. Rare marbles, cornelian, hard pebbles, such as onyx and agates, lapis lazuli and malachite were inlaid in very elaborate designs. Arabesques, birds, beasts, and flowers were mingled in this sumptuous ornament which decorates the table-tops, coffer, and stools of the period. It is not necessary to record Ruskin's severe disapproval of this



BELLOWS, CARVED WALNUT,
LATE 16TH CENTURY.
2 FT. X 11½ INS.



CANDELABRUM, 16TH
CENTURY. 4 FT. 5½ INS.
BARDINI COLLECTION.



MIRROR, CARVED WALNUT,
2 FT. 7½ INS. SOULAGES
COLLECTION

over-ornamentation of the later Renaissance. My task is only to record facts, not opinions.

It is interesting to note that whereas in the Middle Ages the carving and other manifestations of Glyptic art represented such subjects as the lives of the saints, at Renaissance times, scenes from mythology and representations of the months and seasons and of battles predominated.

The really useful articles of furniture, such as chairs, suffered enormously in design by over-ornamentation, the lines became confused, rough surface is used where simplicity is needed, and other defects appear as is natural when the main idea is swamped in pattern. Such examples are to be avoided by the collector, even as specimens of a debased type, as they give nothing but discomfort.

Marqueterie became more usual, and the clever Sicilian joiners and cabinet-makers deftly copied the Dutch models. Mirrors were larger, and gave them opportunities for fine carved or gesso frames. Then came colour in furniture, the heart's delight of all Sicilians, and to the late seventeenth and to the eighteenth century we owe those lovely commodes, chests of drawers, chairs, tables, and what-nots, which we associate with Venice ; but which until recently, when things Italian have become the mode, did not altogether appeal to the English taste. The form and shape is of the eighteenth-century serpentine fronts, cabriole legs, ending in *pied de biche* ; marble tops, or (horror of Britons) wood painted like marble ; but who would not possess, if possible, so lovely a thing as this little chest, rose-red, with flower panels on a cream ground, bowed front and mad rococo handles ? Again the affair is repeated, and the painting is green,

and the panels faintest blue, with anemones, violets, and rose-buds almost obliterated on the medallion, but still showing faded flowers mellow and lovely.

Sometimes great china cabinets, exactly like the highly prized walnut cabinets of Queen Anne, have the characteristic looking-glass cupboards above and writing-shelf and drawers below, and the green rose or brown lacquer paint is flower gemmed, or a panel is painted with a Boucher or Watteau scene, or a figure which Longhi might have painted peeps through a mask of the period, while the other hand governs a hooped skirt. It is all very odd and Sicilian; perhaps it is rather mad; but at the same time, get one into your parlour and you will never let it go.

In order to study the eighteenth-century furniture of Sicily one cannot do better than to look for the genre paintings of Pietro Longhi, whose pictures are now worth their weight in gold; failing these, the prints of his work give us everything but colour. He depicts the life of his day in every phase, from the peasant's cottage, the middle-class rooms of the professional classes, to the saloons, boudoirs, and bedchambers of the aristocrats.

Sober mahogany styles are ubiquitous in Sicily: possibly a Chippendale pattern-book was taken over to the island, or, more likely, some chairs, wardrobes, and tables were imported; then the Sicilian furniture makers, clever as monkeys, would copy, adapt, alter minor details—and, made in the eighteenth century in Sicily, we have our own beloved sobriety once more to tone down the exuberance of rose and green paint.

There is a great deal of Empire furniture in the Island, which possibly came over during or after the Bourbon occupation. Copied by Sicilian workers, the



CARVED COW YOKE. PEASANTS' WORK IN
THE ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM, PALERMO
Studio



CHAIR OF CARVED CHESTNUT WOOD
PARTLY GILT. SOULAGES COLLECTION
Victoria and Albert Museum

inevitable mounts of bronze doré are there—were they sent, or did Sicilian workers cast them?—sphinx heads, brass claw feet for tables large and small. The pure Greek lines of the Napoleonic period are very satisfying—and, oh! how cheap it all is where labour is paid for in lire ($2\frac{1}{2}d.$), compared with English antiques of the same period and quality or those antiques which are made now, rubbed with wire brushes, restored beyond all reason, and next appear in the law-courts as museum specimens!

The Palazzo Favorita, mentioned above, is just outside Palermo, and is such an amusing example of the Chinese taste in Sicily, carried out with such completeness in building, decoration, and furniture, that it is well worth a visit, especially as it has a fine series of Morland's prints in colour and an interesting connection with Nelson, who occupied it for a short time during his stay in Sicily.

We saw many beautiful engravings in Sicily brought over generations ago by people of taste. Besides the remarkable series of Morlands mentioned above, there were in shops and private houses some fine examples and a few rare states of rich English mezzotints, English and French aquatints, English and French line engravings of grace and delicacy printed in colour; many of these were framed in the old tortoise-shell frames, native to Sicily, with beautiful effect.

IRON WORK

The earliest iron work of Sicily, amongst Phœnician examples, bears distinct signs of Egyptian and Assyrian influence. Arms and weapons have been found in the partially explored ruins of Lilybæum and other parts

of the Island, coloured by the Phœnicians, but not many examples can be studied outside Museum cabinets.

The mounting of articles of furniture with iron ornaments was originated by the iron strengthening pieces on chests; these were found to add important decorative effect to the coffer or wooden door, and the fashion was adopted with enthusiasm.

In the sixteenth-century forge work the Sicilians reached a very high point of excellence. Chests and *coffres forts* strengthened and beautified in this way are things to delight the eye, though doubtless the modern burglar would make short work of them.

With the Spanish occupation of Sicily the lovely bowed and scroll-ornamented balconies became a feature—that was in the seventeenth century; up till then wrought iron had mostly been valued for its strength rather than for its ornamental properties. The curio hunter who can find a piece of blacksmith's work with the arms of one of the noble families has probably acquired a good early specimen, such as one sees in the ladder tracery of the Can Grande tombs at Verona, or the mountain and star of the Saraceni Palace at Siena.

In the big square and in other parts of Syracuse, in Castrogiovanni, Randazzo, and other towns, one may see fine iron balconies with bowed bars made to accommodate the hooped skirts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and for convenience in kneeling as religious processions passed.

Great flowers in hammered iron with spreading petals form the corners. Some good old examples of them are in the National Museum at Palermo, and such things may be picked up for a few lire in almost any town in Sicily.



CARVED WOODEN SPOONS MADE BY SHEPHERDS AND GOATHERDS ON THE HILLS. FROM THE ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM, PALERMO

Studio

With regard to the wood carving of household utensils the peasants' untrained work is of course the most characteristic. Every article of personal and domestic use was ornamented. The pipe of the goat-herd musician would have scratched on it the head of a patron saint, or the figure of the Madonna; the shepherds used to shape wooden spoons during the long hours, when away on the mountains. These spoons, of which there is a large collection at the Ethnological Museum at Palermo, often have a figure *en ronde* as the handle, or a pierced flat piece cut in one with the bowl. Butter moulds, small boxes, and inkstands, the heads of distaffs, the blades of wool winders, shepherds' staffs, and curious supports for table glass were all freely ornamented with simple patterns by the untaught artistic boys, geometric patterns and the human figure being the favourite motifs. Some of the goat and cow yokes are much more elaborate, representations of the crucifixion, the Madonna and Bambino, and even rows of figures, being cut deeply into the wood. Shepherds and goat-herds used to vie with each other in the decoration of their beasts' yokes, and chip carving and poker work supplemented the simpler methods.

Small caskets, some with domed tops, were ornamented with chip carving and poker work, as well as large coffers, big enough to hold household linen. In Sicily the peasant bridegroom always offered to his betrothed a busk or corset support of bone or wood, ornamented with his own penknife. A collection of such objects is very interesting.

The carretta and the ornamented bullock carts are the most characteristic objects in the whole of Sicily, and the first noticed and least easy to get used to,

on account of their highly original and picturesque appearance. The carretta is used all over the Island, but in some parts, such as Syracuse, the ornament is weak and attenuated, and in Messina, though the notched carving was still there, we looked for the bright-coloured pictures in vain.

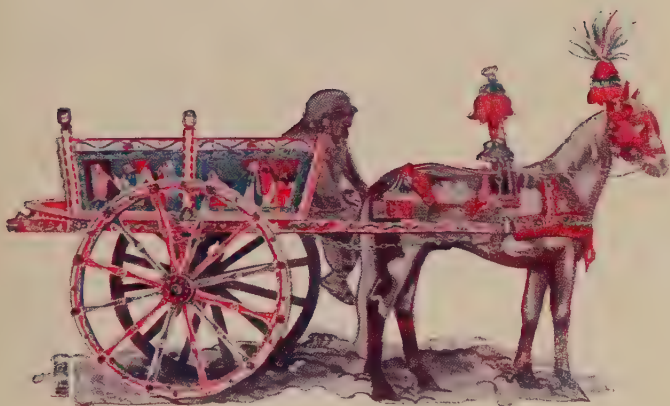
The breadth between the two wheels is identical with the width between the chariot wheels of Greece and Rome ; the same ruts, inches deep in the marble roads, made by those chariots of the Tyrants, may be used by the little painted cart of to-day. The carretta consists of two large wheels and shafts and body. There are no supports beneath the body and no brake. The beam between the two wheels is fastened to the axle by strong metal rings ; the shafts taper towards the ends ; sometimes two movable sides give extra space for the load. These carts are made almost entirely by hand, and in Palermo alone there are several thousands, whose bell-like tinkle, caused by the bronze bearings striking against the iron discs, is a characteristic sound in that noisy town. There are carretta chanties which are sung by the drivers on their long journeys on country roads :

Ch'e bella chista via di Murriali
Ci su'li chiuppa fileri fileri.

Which Signor Giuseppe Capito has translated :

How lovely is this way of Monreale
With poppies growing all in rows and rows.

The decorative carving of the carts is generally begun by the cartwright, who takes chisel and gouge and makes notches and indentations on the inner side of the wheel, producing a lightness and symmetry which is very agreeable without weakening the structure :



CARRETTA

TWO-WHEELED CART, MADE OF OAK, WITH HAND-WROUGHT IRON DRAGON AND FLOWER ORNAMENTS BENEATH. THE FRAME IS OFTEN FINELY CARVED WITH FIGURES OF SAINTS AND ANGELS; THE PANELS GAUDILY PAINTED WITH BIBLE SCENES OR EPISODES IN THE LIVES OF THE PALADINS OF CHARLEMAGNE.

THE MULE HARNESS IS DECORATED WITH FEATHERS, WOOL TASSELS EMBROIDERY, BRASS BOSSES, PIECES OF GLASS AND SMALL BELLS

Studio

these notchings are continued on the other woodwork. The wood carver then begins his work and, using no model, traces the pattern directly with his chisel ; gouges out S. George and the Dragon of many coils, angels, kings, their high rank indicated by attendant lions, and strange heroes and heroines, incidents in whose lives have probably become familiar to the carver from the marionette stage.

Occasionally symbolical ornament may be found, such as a woman's face in a sunflower, the blossom which turns any way where the sun shines—a decorative detail which comes down from the twelfth century, taken from a capital in Monreale's Benedictine cloister.

The predominating colours used in painting the carts are yellow and red, the colours of the municipality of Palermo ; the four panels in the sides and two in the door at the back are usually adorned with pictures ; the rest of the woodwork is covered with crescents, lines, bands, rosettes, suns, stars, flowers, fruit, ribbons, anything pell-mell which comes into the head of the artist. Flat primary colours are used and there is no modelling. A highly decorated cart may cost 1500 lire ; the decorations of the harness, used only on festive occasions, will cost many more lire ; the equipment of feathers 3 feet high on the horse's back, the same on his head, the fringes, woollen tassels, shiny metal spangles, dozens of bells, mirrors, dangling ornaments on the horse's breast are well matched with the gorgeous cart.

BRASS AND COPPER

One can sometimes purchase a fine specimen of Sicilian brass at a fair where the peasants bring in all

sorts of treasures to sell, but as a rule it is not easy to buy brass in Sicily. One can admire the beautiful brazen pans of the hot food sellers, or the brass bottles and ornaments of the lemonade merchant, but as a rule such people are unwilling to sell.

An old brass lamp may often be picked up at a curio shop. It should have a firm round base, a thick stem at least 18 inches high, ending in a looped handle; midway down is the lamp for two wicks and the oil receptacle; pendant from this on brass chains should be snuffers, extinguishers, and pick.

There are plenty of hammered copper vessels to be had, both old and new; pails with rounded ends for carrying on the head, amphoræ also for water carrying; pots and pans, which are delightful for flowers and bulb growing—and all are patterned over with the hammer blows which are so decorative.

A great deal of tortoise-shell was used in Sicily for carving, veneering on pictures and mirror frames, crucifixes and little boxes and chests. The fine old cabinets veneered with tortoise-shell are great prizes, and tortoise-shell veneer worked in Sicily is generally laid down on gold, rather than the red of the Buhl type of French workmanship. The gold and brown effects are very fine. In old Sicilian cabinets the inside back is often punched in a pattern on the wood, then gilt—this makes a lovely background for choice cabinet specimens.

WAXES, WOOD CARVED FIGURES, PRESEPE, CHIP CARVING, AND FURNITURE

Those interested in wax modelling will find a rich field for study in Sicily. In the private collections

belonging to the old families important pieces, measuring 27 inches by 20 inches, will be found. Elaborate scenes sometimes of peasant groups, houses, barns, and cattle sheds, with animals and trees, carved and with waxen foliage. Sometimes court gallants of the Watteau type, whose garments are stiff with silk and gold embroideries. Two fine examples such as these are in possession of the Prince of Trabia Butera in his Palazzo on the Marina at Palermo. In the Palazzo Mazarino there are wax groups together with the silver and coral scenes *en ronde* which are described elsewhere.

In the Museum at Palermo the life-size portrait of a priest in wax is remarkable; from the dress it is eighteenth-century work; the head is turned in three-quarter position. In the Museo Nazionale also there are several wax portraits in silhouette, but, alas! no date or signature is to be found.

There is an interesting example of wax modelling in the Duomo at Taormina, near the Catania Gate, in the north apse, where the lovely marble Madonna stands above the altar. The subject is the Last Supper, and the thirteen figures are well modelled, the woman-like beauty of the young S. John being in fine contrast with the older, bearded faces of the other apostles.

From figurine of wax it is but a step to those of wood, where the faces, arms, legs, hands, and feet were carved wood, and the bodies of rag, so as to be pliable.

After the eighteenth century the heads are sometimes of terra-cotta; the modern Presepe figure is of papier mâché. The first authoritative record of the representation of the Nativity at Christmas by means of small figures is at the Basilica Liberiana of Sante Maria Maggiore in Rome, according to an article contributed to *Roma*, December 1910.

Rassegna illustrata dell' Esposizione del 1911: a representation took place regularly at Christmas in one of the chapels. It was this that Gregory IV, A.D. 827-843, used as his model for a Nativity which he caused to be erected in S. Maria in Trastevere.

Sicily, accustomed from earliest times to the Mystery Plays, the last relic of which is probably the Easter Play at Adorna, the Presepe, which is a translation in dialect of the biblical narrative of the birth of Christ, became common all over Italy and Sicily, and great skill, rich dresses, jewels and accessories, were lavished on the little figures.

It was customary for noble families to have their own Presepe, and it is on record that Carlo III of Naples prepared or superintended a Presepe with his own hands, and his queen cut up many of her sumptuous brocade and embroidered garments to dress the figurines.

The different types of figures had their several modellers. Of these the most famous was Giuseppe San Martino, whose speciality was peasant life; many of his shepherds were taken from figures of well-to-do peasants of the day. Giuseppe Gori generally made nobles and Oriental figures; it is probable that the fine mounted Magi now at the Victoria and Albert Museum are by him.

Fruit, vegetables, and cattle of all kinds are to be seen in a fine Nativity, and are well shown in the suitably set up scenes at the Munich Museum. Francesco di Nardo was famous for his animals, together with the brothers Saverio and Nicola Vassallo. Francesco Gallo, one of the modellers of the Capodimonte Porcelain Works, also modelled animals for the Presepe.

Besides the three most usual tableaux, complete representations of other Biblical episodes were made, notably the Slaughter of the Innocents, now owned by Mrs. Joshua Whitaker; the figures are portrayed in the perpetration of the most terrible acts of cruelty and in a graphic and virile way.

Very elaborate groups have been collected and added to by the Marchesa del Paino, and are set up in a special building in the garden of her Villa at Palermo. Fine examples of the peasant figure are faithful representations, down to the most insignificant details, of contemporary peasant costumes, which are so fast disappearing. Prince Scalea has some good examples made by Mattero and also by San Martino of Naples: they almost rival in delicacy the Greek figurines of Tanagra.

Of the superb box-wood and pear-wood carvings there are many, ranging from comparatively modern century-old examples to those up to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Sicily gives a good opportunity for the study of such objects in Museums and in the cabinets of private collectors, and a treasure may be found of moderate price by the diligent searcher.

CHAPTER X

POTTERY, GLASS

THE Greeks, landing at Naxos, were in Sicily for about 500 years, and undoubtedly brought with them the instruments of their arts and crafts. There was suitable clay for their pottery close to their new colony, and they have also left evidences of their activities in the kilns of Achradina and Plemmyrium, near Syracuse.

At such places as Girgenti quantities of Sicilian-Greek objects in terra-cotta are found, Sicilian-Greek statuettes, tomb ornaments, sarcophagi, vases, boxes, cups, and hand-lamps. It is said that no fewer than 37,000 of these last have been found at Selinunte, and in every curio shop they form the chief items of the stock.

In studying the numberless examples of Greek vases in the National Museum at Palermo, at Girgenti, at the richly endowed museum at Syracuse, the survivals of the earthquake at Messina, and in private collections, much application is necessary, for there is no homely information on the life and circumstances of the artists to help us, no traits we can recognize, no anecdotes that make a name or style memorable and add an impulse of curiosity to the delight in the art work itself. The literature that deals with them is a literature of specialists and no pictures or reproductions can

help us, because it is difficult to reproduce the decoration of a rounded vase surface without distortion, and when the picture is flattened out its apparent connection with the vase has ceased.

One of the first facts to remember is that the beauty of a vase picture does not lie in its closeness to life likeness. The action of the figure is controlled and determined by the circle or space which it is designed to fill. The success in carrying out this essential is what makes a fine decoration. The artist's endeavour is also limited by fashion and the use of the object to be decorated.

Greek vases have been called "brittle relics of the jolly prime of the world." Mr. D. S. MacColl says, "The wine and the oil are dry and the cup is often broken, but the laughter and the poetry still flicker on its sides."

Briefly, for the benefit of the general reader, one sees in the public and private collections in Sicily, vessels for storing. The chief is the amphora, with narrow neck for excluding the air and two handles for lifting: when very large, these vessels of baked clay were sunk in the ground; they were then called casks, for wine, grain, or oil.

Vessels for drawing water, hydria, with large body and narrow neck, a third handle for tilting and pouring. *Oinochoe* is a wine-pourer of small size, like our decanters; such vessels have a thin neck and a lip. An oil-pourer has a wider neck; an oil-dropper, a very small neck.

Vessels for mixing were called Kraters—the Greeks mixed water with their wine—such a vessel has two handles, a wide mouth, and a narrow bottom.

Vessels for drinking out of vary in shape; early ones

have a long stem, some have handles on the cup. There were special shapes made at special periods.

All these vessels were decorated, usually in the earlier vases with black silhouette figures and patterns, in the later vases with figures, surrounded by black; sometimes white was added, and there are rare examples with faint colour.

The earliest type of human figure represented is angular, and has exaggerated muscular development; later, the perfect human form was drawn. The best period for decoration was just after Pericles (about 450 B.C.).

The subjects for figure decoration were taken from mythology or scenes from daily life: sometimes the two types were mixed, and we may see satyrs getting in the harvest or in a street or school.

So critical were the Greek purchasers that they would go to the house of the potter and choose the quality and tint of the clay before ordering the vessel.

An interesting vase decoration exists, showing the workshop of a Greek potter. In a house is a boy seated on a low stool turning a potter's wheel; next is a pillar indicating the porch of a house, so that the second figure sits outside; he is a bearded man, and holds a vase, while he shapes the inside with his left hand: two vases which have been fired are cooling at his side. Then there is a kiln and a man stoking, a boy brings up more fuel. Over the door of the kiln are masks to propitiate the demons of Crackage, Splitage, and Wreckage. How pleasant it would be to have such preventive masks in our pantries and china and glass cupboards. Handles, foot, and neck were added separately, being stuck on with wet clay before burning.

Sometimes a great artist like Chachrylion would make a vase and sign it before handing it over to a fellow-artist, such as Euphronios, for decoration. Sometimes an artist like Exekias will sign for both making and painting. The painting was fired at a lower temperature than the first baking of the pottery. Decoration was done with outline in black or full black on the red clay, or the process reversed, and background would be black, the figures and other decoration left in the red of the clay, like a positive and negative in photography.

Of exquisite figurines (though not as fine as those of Tangra) of superbly modelled animals (a bull of terracotta 20 inches high and perfect costs a thousand pounds—at any rate that is the price asked, and I believe bargaining is not unknown) of a dozen other beautiful examples we need not speak; enough has been said. In Sicily one can find reasonably perfect examples of Greek and Roman pottery at reasonable prices, and though curio shops may tempt, the shelves of the private dealer, known to every hotel keeper at such towns as Syracuse and Girgenti, are still more attractive and liable to be full of less costly specimens turned up by the pick and spade of the owner, or that of a friend, for everyone at such places seems to dig either in his own garden or with a neighbour.

At Syracuse the remains of prehistoric kilns are near the sea, and at Plemmyrium the Greek kilns and potteries are below the lighthouse: they are practically perfect near the rocks which Virgil describes as surf beaten. On the cliffs of Achradina there are also remains of Greek kilns opposite to the Cappuccini convent close to the Villa Politi.

Secanian and Sikelian pieces are occasionally to be

found, but if genuine are very costly. It is quite possible to find one or a genuine fragment a few feet below the surface, for all the ground in this neighbourhood is full of treasures. Caltagirone, where so much fine pottery has been made, is the town which is the terminus on the Catania railway line. Two thousand feet above sea-level, it has great deposits of argillaceous clay, of which the splendid Caltagirone majolica was made.

Perhaps the most interesting old specimens of pottery in Sicily are those examples by Arab and Moorish potters that are believed to have been made in the Island, and thus form a link between earlier Eastern pottery and the majolicas of Caltagirone.

The paste is a dull white and very hard, the outlines of the pattern in black, the glaze, thick and translucent, runs in tears about the base. Imitative inscriptions, used as pattern, are difficult to decipher; they are simply good-luck wishes to the possessor, in Cufic.

When the church of S. Giacomo was demolished at Palermo in 1864 fragments of glazed wares, some with iridescent reflections, were found: these were probably the work of the Arab potters of the seventh to the eleventh century A.D., made *in Sicily* during the Arab occupation. They are known to experts as Siculo Arabian, appearing as such in the Catalogue of Majolicas in South Kensington Museum of 1872.

So rare and precious are specimens of this date that the ownership of nearly every known specimen is registered. Of these the most important example is the oviform vase, described as "of silicious glazed earthenware, similar in character to Persian ware;



Fig. 1. COFFIN. GLAZED EARTHENWARE. SICULO-ARABIC. WHITE GROUND, WINGED
 FIGURE IN CENTER, BLACK TINTED BLUE. 14TH CENTURY. 15INS. HIGH. IN VICTORIA
 AND ALBERT MUSEUM

an imitative inscription encircles the body of the vase, which is 15 inches in height, 10 inches wide." Four others of similar shape were in the Castellani collection and are now at the Hotel Cluny in Paris.

Probably some few others may still be in Sicily, and an owner who is unaware of their value may read these words.

Prince Filangieri, who has described some of the pieces still in Sicily, states that the glaze is a soda glass, and he asserts quite persistently that such pieces were made at Caltagirone: he also mentions Trapani, Girgenti, Castrogiovanni, and Mazzara as probable sites for the old kilns.

Many of the armorial tiles—mattoni, stagnati—used outside houses, convents, monasteries, etc., to indicate ownership were made at Caltagirone: their fore-runners of stone are sometimes to be seen *in situ*, notably on the west front of the Carmine church at Girgenti, where four of Moresque workmanship indicate the trade guilds of the Shoemakers, Shepherds, and Winesellers; the carved symbols are in sunken squares.

Fine examples of the pottery armorial tiles are in the Sicilian majolica room at the National Museum at Palermo. Of the private collections, that owned by Mr. Joshua Whitaker is the finest; these tiles are much sought after.

Roof tiling is a different matter, though bright and effective in a baroque style, with the geometrical patterning in polychrome. The Porta Nuova has these tiles on the road leading to Monreale.

At Caltagirone, fine tile pictures were made for floor decoration. They are to be seen in the State-rooms in the old Villas and Palazzi, and there one may study the subjects, which range from real country scenes to the

fanciful figures of gallants masquerading in peasants' dress, attending hunting and hawking parties ; here the mounted sportsmen are accompanied by ladies and have with them their sporting dogs.

Such pictures in pottery will be made up of 18 to 30 eight-inch tiles ; they are usually dated (eighteenth century), and have as framing, pink or puce or brownish arabesques, also on tiles.

The effect of such a floor decoration is delightful. No carpets or rugs are laid down, and the warmth and gaiety of the climate makes the result perfect.

The fashion of tile flooring dates from long ago in 1477. Giovanni Antonio and Francesco da Urbino supplied the Archbishop's palace with polychrome pavement : no wonder the fashion was adopted in Sicily and carried out by her native potters.

In the Trabia Butera Palace in Palermo the floor-covering in every room is the same deep pile white carpet similar to Wilton, with the heraldry of the house repeated as the pattern ; the effect is lovely, resembling the tiled floors of early days but of velvety warmth and comfort.

Portraits on drug jars, pots, plates, or any large object are often to be found in the earthenware of Sicily. Sometimes a piece is dated, probably about 1610 to 1670. Many apothecaries' jars were made in Italy in the sixteenth century by the great majolica factories specially for the Sicilian market.

Some of these were acquired by the hospitals of the day, when a set would be made complete for every purpose, large and small. The drug pots made at Urbino in the seventeenth century specially for the Messina Hospital are probably the finest specimens in the world : they are seventy-four in number, and they

have happily been saved from disaster and are now in the tiny one-floor museum at Messina, where are arranged so many of the art objects that could be found amongst ruined galleries, churches, and palaces after the earthquake seventeen years ago.

The jars were made in 1568 for the Ospedale Civico, and about twenty-five years ago were sold by the hospital authorities to the municipality for £2,400 for use in the museum. Their lustre is superb, and the richness of the blues, greens, yellows, and browns most harmonious and at the same time very gay and bright. Heads of sages, warriors, and fair ladies almost life-size decorate some of them, others show pictures of gods and goddesses disporting amongst typical Italian rock scenery; they were made at the time when the decorated pottery of the Italian Renaissance was as supreme an art as was that of architecture and painting.

Amongst the most valuable specimens of the majolica of Caltagirone are the figures representing old Sicilian types of ladies of fashion, and also of the peasants in the varied costumes of their district. The collector will be lucky who obtains a genuine example of the *contadini*.

Mrs. Joshua Whitaker has two of the finest I have seen; they are 18 inches high and brilliant in colouring. These ladies of the hooped-skirt period have a charm not easily described, and are valuable not only on account of their beauty but also because of their extreme rarity.

On a pharmacy vase a Caltagirone mark runs thus :

Hopera facta di Mo Antonio

Brandi in Caltagirone anno 1779.

Dinner, tea, and coffee services were largely made by all the majolists; records of orders have been found

where it has been stipulated that the arms of the house shall be blazoned in the centre, and the crest, a dog or a lion, shall make the handles of the dish covers ; unfortunately, such services would be in daily use and few pieces survive

A very complete series of the commoner objects for domestic use are in the Ethnological Museum at Palermo, brought together by the late Professor Giuseppe Pitrè. Amongst these are dozens of varieties of the old oil lamps, from five and six tier pyramids, 16 inches across the base, holding ten or twelve wicks on the lowest ring, gradually tapering up to the topmost, which holds a single oil-fed thread.

The effect when these multiple lamps were lit and showed a pyramid of light must have been charming.

There are Caltagirone figures, where the oil is poured into an orifice on one shoulder and the wick lighted at the other shoulder ; where a woman has the light arranged as a headdress ; where a man has the wick in his two outstretched hands, or it comes from his breast pockets, his shoulder epaulettes, or from some musical instrument he is playing ; there seems no end to the fertility of invention which these old potters displayed, and always with a hint of exaggeration in the modelling, which is almost caricature.

With regard to the colouring of these household specimens, it is doubtful if facility of execution and perfunctory treatment is the supreme expression of talent, but of the dexterity of the majolica painters there is no doubt, and there is undoubtedly a rough charm in the verve and humanity of the figure subjects and the careful study of nature in the fruit, flower, and vegetable subjects. The poise, balance, and proportions are admirable, however rough the finish, and



CALTAGIRONE FIGURES, GLAZED AND COLOURED EARTHENWARE, 18INS. HIGH.
18TH CENTURY

From Mrs. Joshua Whitaker's Collection.



NECROPOLIS, WITH CINERARY URNS AT MOTYA, NEAR MARSALA, THE PROPERTY OF J. I. S.
WHITAKER. F.Z.S., AUTHOR OF "MOTYA, A PHENICIAN COLONY IN SICILY"

the bold splashes of colour with no attempt at labouring of an idea give individuality to every piece.

Sometimes a shield is painted in the centre of a dish, and a grisaille border rests on a blue or gold ground, but painting in grisaille is used sparingly.

It is strange that in certain districts a vessel of special shape will be supplied by the local factory, even by those still existing, and its use will be considered as obligatory on the inhabitants of that district, as is the wearing of the national dress.

As to marks, monograms, and graphic figures on Sicilian majolicas, they do not always indicate precise localities of origin, names of artists and makers, or even dates of manufacture. An itinerant craftsman, of whom there were many, might use a sign to distinguish his personal work from that of his mates, *and use it at several factories* ; sometimes he would add the name of the town, not in which he was working, but which he had last come from. When two marks are inscribed side by side, it may mean the name of the artist and the master of the factory—more mystery than enlightenment as a rule comes from reliance on such data.

The majolicas of Trapani are chiefly to be found with portraits painted on them: the dates I have noted have been of the eighteenth century. The factory has long been closed, so that any specimen found will be antique.

Tiles were made at Trapani for mattoni and also for sectional pictures for floors. Heraldic decoration was much used, usually roughly painted in brown, blue, or green on yellow ground.

Some specimens have Amorini playing in landscapes ; these were taken from the line engravings of the day.

Animals' heads occasionally adorn the pharmacy jars or those for storing sugars, spices, etc. ; these are frequently two-handled.

Bust figures were made at Trapani, and the features are curiously realistic ; no conventions imposed by the study of antique statuary seem to have curtailed the realism of the modellers. The statuettes are usually white and very highly glazed.

The pottery of Palermo shown in the National Museum is very much like that of Trapani and Caltagirone of the same period, but the decoration is more brilliantly coloured. A date on several specimens was 1599. Dates of the first decade of the seventeenth century are also frequent.

Two Palermo marks are respectively :

Fatto in Palermo.

Ja covo Cefali dine castro

La felice in H. V. Recialli 1617.

Geo seppe : Pira ina Dine Catro.

La Pinse.

The colouring of the pottery of Collesano and Sciacca is much paler than either that of Caltagirone or Palermo—browns, blues, and greens in faint shades are used and are dated 1660 to 1664. A Collesano mark runs thus : *Joanni Saldo Collesano.*

A superb round dish of majolica richly decorated with figures measured 22 inches in diameter : it had an interesting history, told me by Princess Scalea. Her father-in-law, a noted antiquarian and collector, was a staff officer of Garibaldi in 1860, and on entering a village the nuns from a neighbouring convent brought out a great supply of the delicious sugar cakes and cream-filled cornucopia of Sicily piled on the old



FIGURES IN TERRA COTTA, PEASANT TYPES, MADE AT CALTAGINONE, QINS. SIGNOR DAVEU'S COLLECTION

majolica plate. Garibaldi took one, and while thanking the nuns directed that they should be handed round to his men. When the dish was brought back it was empty. "Ah," said Garibaldi, "no cake left for you, Prince, you shall have the dish," and I saw it, mounted as a table, in the Villa Scalea.

Mr. Solon, in his "History of Italian Majolica," says :

There is in its very coarseness and imperfection a variety of result through which each piece received a certain stamp of individuality which we miss in the mechanical earthenware of our own time.

Besides the ceramics made in the island, there is much beautiful china to be seen in private collections which has been brought into the country from time to time. Hispano Mauresque during the Spanish occupation, Capo di Monte with superb gold ornamentation and delicately painted landscapes, and portraits of King Bomba and other notabilities on account of the close proximity of Naples.

Capo di Monte factory close to Naples being opened in 1737, the early star-marked examples are of great interest: their decoration is generally of Oriental type. It was discontinued in 1921, and the models and moulds were bought by the Doccia factory belonging to Marquis Carlo Ginore at the Villa Doccia near Florence.

There is an interesting Nelson letter connected with the Capo di Monte factory written to Lord St. Vincent :

A little circumstance has happened which does honour to the King of Naples and is not unpleasant to me. I went to see the magnificent manufactory of china. After admiring all the fine things sufficient to seduce the money from my pocket, I came to some busts in china of all the Royal family: these I

immediately ordered, and when I went to pay for them I was informed that the King had directed whatever I chose should be delivered free of all cost, and it was handsome of the King.

Biscuit groups from Naples, notably those in the cabinets of Prince Trabia Butera, Princess Ganci, and Mr. Joshua Whitaker, are hardly distinguishable from the reproductions of Sèvres. At the Palazzo Mazarini there are good examples of the subsidized factories of Louis XV, Menecy Vincennes, etc., and some beautiful services of English Spode of the best period, besides Derby and Chelsea Derby figures.

In the Butera Palazzo is a cabinet containing relics in china of Queen Caroline, who presented to the Prince some beautiful examples of the rare silhouette portrait porcelain. On Saxony china cups and saucers are the black silhouette portraits of members of the reigning house of Saxony. The Queen's autograph letter lies amongst them.

Many of the dealers in Sicily are very ignorant about the porcelains of France and England, and their knowledge of English and Irish glass is of the slightest, though abundant in connection with Venetian makes.

At the Villa of Prince Scalea there are superb early examples of Murano, and their display in glass-adorned cabinets of Venetian workmanship gives the happiest effect. Princess Ganci also has very fine early Venetian glass in her cabinets.

The earliest Sicilian glass is Phœnician, already mentioned amongst early examples of beads in the National Museum at Palermo. There are good coloured glass vases in the Randazzo Museum and three necklaces, one of which is the finest known.

If Egypt invented the art of glass-making it is

considered by experts to be the Phœnicians to whom we owe the perfected quality. The fine quality of the sand, which lay near, the ease with which soda and other necessary ingredients could be obtained, made the manufacture of every glass, transparent, opaque, coloured and colourless, a comparatively easy matter.

Small polychrome articles, tear bottles, vases, amulets, are found in many Sicilian tombs, besides the beads and discs alluded to in our chapter on personal ornaments.

Early Saracenic glass is known to all connoisseurs. Whether it was ever produced during their occupation of Sicily I have not been able to find out; a specimen would probably be enamelled, the pattern Arabic lettering, scrolls, and conventional foliage; flasks, vases, goblets, beakers and lamps for mosques were made; the glass is darkish, green, and thick.

Gold glass pictures *eglomisé* are to be seen curiously often in the antique shops, and considering their rarity and beauty the price is reasonable. Mrs. Joshua Whitaker has some very good examples of the sixteenth century, 7 inches by 10; the subjects are generally ecclesiastical and in beautiful condition; small pieces are also to be found made up into rings, bracelets, brooches, and other trinkets. I did not find any examples of silhouette portraits, black on the gold background, in this method: occasionally the glass painted at the back is mounted on tortoise-shell, with excellent effect.

CHAPTER XI

GARDENS AND WILD FLOWERS

SICILY, outpost of Europe, was on the great trade route of the East. Palermo and Syracuse especially had constant intercourse with Egypt, Syria, and beyond, and when her garden history began, the Saracens, with their Eastern ideas and modes of living, formed her population.

In A.D. 827 they had landed at Mazzara; four years later Palermo fell into their hands, and from that time became the capital; gradually one city after another was conquered until, in the tenth century, Sicily was a prosperous kingdom under Mohammedan sway. It will be remembered that the Arab dynasty remained until the middle of the eleventh century, when the Normans conquered the island.

This passing reference to Sicily's history is necessary to account for the influences which still affect Sicilian garden planning, with its lemon groves, parks, cypress avenues, pleasaunces, and lakes.

In Sicily the buildings, terracing, water-gardens, bridges, and pavilions, etc., are the most important and lasting work in a garden, the tree and shrub planting next, and the planting of flowers, which can be done differently by successive generations and much of it necessarily renewed every year, is the least important part—in fact, many Sicilian gardens contain few

flowers, except those of trees and shrubs. This exactly reverses our English valuation of garden effects, for to the average Englishman a modern garden always means flowers, and often very little else.

The form of the garden adopted in Sicily came straight from the Egyptian and Indian garden palaces or palace gardens, with their enclosing walls, water-gardens, and high tiled gateways, which were not only a delight in the hot climate, but also a necessity for the *purdah*-sheltered women; the high walls would also be defence against marauders and prevent the escape of slaves. The imposing entrances were a great feature in large gardens: there were often four, one in the centre of each wall. The elaborate gateway habit has certainly taken root in the minds of Sicilian garden builders, so much so, that one often sees an imposing iron gate with solidly built pillars, still standing, long after the walls have crumbled and disappeared in an old and neglected place.

The plan of the garden is always made to lead up to the dwelling-house, and its architecture, in bridges and pavilions, will coincide with the style of the villa. One enters the lodge gates, a dusky cypress avenue leads to a stone water-garden, where a fountain plays, paths converge and rose hedges bring one to the portico of the house, pillared and ornamented with growing palms in stone or marble pots.

Another entrance in the enclosing wall will lead straight between clipped rosemary hedges up broad steps to a terrace with marble balustrade, and from this opens the wide loggia of the villa. But on the way there will be a glimpse of shady trees, a garden pavilion, and still, dark water and cypress spires, with here and there a magic revelry of sunshine, duly held in check,

for it is mostly shadow that these dwellers in fiercely hot climates need. The love of cypress beauty is inherited from Greek ancestry, when Theocritus wrote : " As is the cypress in the garden, or in a chariot a horse of Thessalian breed, even so is rose red Helen the glory of Lacedæmon."

It is interesting to see a relic of the water-garden of the East at the Arabic Palace of La Zisa at Palermo ; it was built by Saracen workmen for King William I, the Norman, who occupied it as his pleasure-house.

Its name is derived from the Arabic word Zis or Sis, a flower, and those who have heard of other romantically named Eastern gardens, Bagh-i-Vafa, the Garden of Fidelity, near Kabul, and the Jasmine Tower, part of the Taj Mahal of Shah Jehan, who built it for his beloved, will feel that Zisa's name is well in keeping with Eastern Arabic tradition.

The Palace of Zisa is a huge building ; there is a great loggia and a Saracenic arch with fine ironwork, the vaulting springs from Saracenic columns ; its walls are marble below and golden mosaics above, where peacocks eat the fruit of date palms ; the fountain in the back wall pours its waters along a mosaic channel in the floor : thus the water garden is in keeping with other ornament in the house : the beauty of the flash and sparkle of sunlit water, running in a mosaic channel of blue and gold, has to be seen to be believed. The water flowed into a fish-pond, which still existed in 1626. It was close to the great entrance, a square of 60 feet each side, enclosed by reticulated walls.

In the middle was a building, reached by a little bridge, and here was a small room, 12 feet long by 6 feet wide, with two windows, where the fish might be seen swimming in the water. Out of this beautiful little

room for the women opened three windows, each consisting of two arches, resting on tiny columns of finest white marble.

The planning of such a water pavilion would be fully in accordance with Oriental need; the essential privacy was obtained close to the cool of the water. Moorcroft, who visited Lahore in 1820, gives a description of a garden room, whose walls could be sprayed with water during the heat.

Small jets are still in use in some of the old Sicilian gardens where, wandering in a maze, one may find oneself sprayed by thin streams of water rising from innocent-looking cracks in the pavement or a pipe cunningly twisted round the branch of a tree; such small practical jokes were modish a couple of centuries ago, and the light-hearted Sicilian would enjoy the fun hugely. One may even see an example in Paxton's garden at Chatsworth, where in a labyrinth one is caught by the water-spraying branches of what appears to be a little shrub set cunningly in the parterre.

Old diaries of Sicilian householders have allusion to rest and recreation in gardens and attention to vineyards and olive groves or the clipping and training of rose arbours and evergreen box hedges, encircling parterres in quaint pattern: these may still be seen to-day in Chinese design at La Favorita, outside Palermo. These old gardens were used for leisure and the entertainment of intimate friends.

La Cuba, another splendid Saracen palace near Palermo, on the road to Monreale, is now a cavalry barracks: it was built by one of the Emirs and later inscriptions are on it.

Boccaccio lays his story of the young Giovanni di Procida Restilula, the Admiral Roger di Toria, and

King Frederick II of Aragon, at Palermo, at the Palace of the Cuba. Fasella, the old historian, writing in the fifteenth century, thus describes its pleasure-grounds :

United to the palace outside the walls of the city towards the west was a Pomarium that is a royal circus (in the East a part of the garden was always assigned to deer, hares, gazelles, and other animals). Here were the loveliest gardens with all kinds of flowers, and *they were always watered*. Here and there were thickets fragrant with laurel and myrtle. . . . In the middle was a large fish pond built of ancient blocks of stone, of wondrous size, in which living fish were enclosed . . . wild animals of almost every species were kept at one side of the garden.

Owing to the abundance of water supplied by great aqueducts in ancient times, fish-ponds, streams, and fountains were made important features in the gardens of Sicily, and in planning a garden there, as in a garden in Italy, reflections in water were made use of, as an additional beauty.

This is excellently shown at the garden of Count Tasca, where tall cypresses and beautiful carob trees make a background for a temple of classical design. The whole scene is carefully placed so that a perfect reflection is obtained in the lake.

Relics of the enormous stores of water for supply are to be seen at Girgenti, where the aqueducts, though seldom noticed except by antiquarians, are amongst the most astounding works to be seen in that city, which is so full of the marvellous building of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.

Tunnels are cut for vast distances through the rock high enough for a man to stand upright, and the huge cistern in the garden of S. Nicola is evidence of a water

supply which would be plentiful both for use and ornament.

It is interesting that the name of the overseer and master of the works is known; "he was one Pheax, and the conduits were called Pheaces," said Diodorus; "the artificers were the prisoners taken in war."

But it is not only in water gardens, water pavilions, and fountains that the Oriental influence is seen in Sicily: terraces, roofed walks, and resting places were required in the East as a protection from the sun, and Sicily's garden planners adopted them, placing them amongst growth of shrubs and flowers where perfume would enhance the delight of those who wandered in those outdoor pleasure palaces.

Sometimes subterranean chambers were used as refuge from the heat, or grottos were excavated and faced with stone, where niches held statues and a fountain spouted from the wall. Such an excavation of modern work is in Mr. Whitaker's garden at Sperlinga, a wooded knoll with a river flowing at its base, or a stream suggesting cool depths was used; such a river would have one or more bridges of stone or marble (wood is practically unobtainable in Sicily and the whole Island a vast quarry), so that the gardens are made beautiful with the more decorative and lasting work.

Another device for adding to the beauty of a Sicilian garden is the using a distant view of valley or mountain as a feature. From a terrace or loggia will be planned a flight of steps broad and handsome, with wide marble pillared sides, descending into the garden; then a pleached alley with pollarded acacias crouching near to each other in line, where marble benches are set at intervals and perhaps statues in clipped verdure

frames, for the garden must be rich in shade, rich in perfume, in beauty, and tranquillity. Lower still a few steps lead to a cascade, and so on till, framed in tall cypress, the view of distant hill is held as if it were a great natural picture hung in the garden and led up to with definite planning from the threshold of the Palace terrace.

How fair a description of a Sicilian garden to-day is Theocritus' country scene in Idyl V. :

The oak trees and here the galingale, and sweetly here hum the bees about the hives. There are two wells of chill water, and on the tree the birds are warbling and the shadow is beyond compare with that where thou liest and from on high the pine tree pelts us with her cones.

A rose garden is a feature of many Sicilian gardens, but curiously unlike our English rosaries. There comes to mind the roses of Persia, and the old rose singer, Omar Khayyam of Khorassan, the astronomer poet. How he loved them, "each morn a thousand Roses"!

There is rose growth to perfection in Sicily now, sometimes in parterres, of choice and fragrant varieties, the last word in modern rose development; more often in thick and sturdy hedges, which form beautiful ornamental barriers, or in shade-giving thicket as in Taormina, where tiny yellow clusters frothing across great pillars are as useful for screen as they are fragrant and beautiful.

In the garden of the Villa Paino at Palermo great use is made of rose growth. Monthly rose hedges of sturdy habit, carefully clipped and full of bloom, make a dividing line at the edge of the lemon grove, laden with golden fruit; a little further on there is



A TREE-FRAMED GARDEN VIEW DEFINITELY LED UP TO AS A
GARDEN FEATURE



A CLOISTER GARDEN

a paved circle of 60 feet in diameter, where a trellis of ramblers, pink, red, and white, forms the walls of the "ball-room": this is arched with ropes where the rose branches make a compact roof.

Further on in the lemon grove is an aviary, built solidly on pillars of the thin red Sicilian brick; fine wire netting makes the walls, and on the windy side is a sheet of glass as protection for numbers of birds twittering and flying about. Amongst garden buildings these permanent and substantially built bird pavilions are very common, and the song of the birds adds a charm in these gardens, where there would probably be no song-birds if they were not caged, as the garden and grove are near the town and nearly every Sicilian owns a gun.

Aviaries are characteristically Sicilian: we see them in a good many of the large houses. There is a charming one in the ante-room of Prince Scalea's country house. As we drink tea the birds give us checrful music, so different from the din of a band, which is often the bewildering accompaniment at tea-time in public places.

In talking to a Sicilian he will always tell you who built the garden or how the garden was built, instead of describing, as we should, how it was planted. The reason for this being not only on account of pavilions, bridges, and other buildings described above, but because so many gardens are terraced, or it would be impossible to lay them out on the rocky and precipitous places where no English gardener would think a garden could exist.

The garden of the Taormina Villa of the Duke of Bronte is literally built on the face of the sea-cliffs, so that nowhere does it measure more than a dozen

yards in depth, and it is in many tiers. Elaborately buttressed staircases or steps hewn in the solid cliff face lead from one garden to another, and solid marble balustrades protect the sheer walls. In such precipitous places, as in the mountain farming as well, a man must be an engineer first before he can be a gardener or a farmer.

Lovely groups of marble pillars support wisteria and oleander at Bronte, rambler roses are ready for a later wealth of bloom: carved cisterns and basins hold choice sedums and carnations, and a garden pavilion ornamented with antique capitals is wedged against the cliff.

In this garden there is a perfectly trained hedge 30 inches high of bougainvilleas; its width is 20 inches; the sides are clipped foliage, and at the flat top is a sheet of purple bloom stretching away in fine perspective. This beautiful line of colour encloses standard orange trees, rising from a bed of double white stock: the effect was lovely—purple, white, green, and gold, the air redolent of stocks and orange blossom perfume.

The Flora, or garden of the Villa Giulea, close to the Porta S. Antonino at Palermo, is said to be the first public garden to have been opened in the Island. It was laid out in the last quarter of the eighteenth century with blossoming trees and shrubs; the people congregate to listen to music.

There are avenues of Portugal laurel which lead up to a kind of Valhalla of the statues of famous Sicilians grouped round the fountain, where Marabelli's Trinacria is carved. The description of the arms of Sicily taken from a Roman coin will be found under "Coins."

The Orto Botanico, ably directed by Professor Dossi,



TERRACED GARDEN WITH ALMOND BLOSSOM,
STRAITS OF MESSINA AS BACKGROUND



GARDEN OF VILLA TASCA. GROUPS OF PINE,
CYPRUS, PALM AND AGAPANTHUS



CLIFF GARDEN OF THE DUCA DI BRONTE, TAORMINA. MARBLE WELL HEAD WITH GROW-
ING PAPYRUS; HEDGE OF CLIPPED BOURGAMVILLIEAS WITH PURPLE BLOSSOM

Galif

easily stands first in scientific organization; like all public gardens in the Island, it is laid out with finely grown trees, so planted that their shape is well displayed: here huge bamboos, yuccas, palms, aloes, agaves, euphorbias, are seen to perfection, and the curious habit to our English eyes of sturdy growth of weeds beside cultivated plants greets us at every turn.

There is no slovenliness in this; the Sicilian mind seems to exclude the right to tear up plants which are self-sown. An English friend, whose native taste dictated the removal of grass weeds from the middle of a bed of choice mauve violets, gave orders to her Sicilian gardener for their destruction.

“But,” remonstrated the man, “they are both so beautiful.” Such argument is unanswerable. His words make one think of the lines:

Mine is no beauty here nor fragrance true,
But in the garden of the Lord I grew.

The lemon groves of the Parco d'Aumale belong to the Duke of Orleans; they are wonderfully fruitful, for they are on the dried-up bed of the old harbour, and the espaliered roses seem to thrive in great luxuriance in the sea-breezes on that coast near the Marina at Palermo.

Formerly the Sicilian nobles lived in their fortress-like palaces, content with one of the hanging gardens or palm-filled spaces, on the first floor, where oleanders thrive in antique Roman cisterns and bougainvilleas climbed the slender pillars of a pergola. Such a garden may be seen in the Palazzo Mazzarini in Palermo, where one steps out of one of the apartments on the first floor to a palm-shaded garden, where

agave and yucca thrive and *Wistaria sinensis* with its long graceful racemes of purple flowers grows, not in jars and cisterns, but in solid ground.

Such another garden there is in Castrogiovanni—Enna of the ancients, Kasr Jani of the Arabs. Belonging to an old palace in the centre of this rocky nest 3,300 feet up the mountain side, the garden is 40 feet above the street or narrow way, worn by men and mules and cartwheels for a thousand years or more.

There is a fine wrought-iron balustrade, behind which cypresses tower and a billowy drapery of beech and silver birch with flowering shrubs. A kindly old woman at her door nearby says that it is crowded with the nobili when at the July festa the Madonna makes her progress.

In the sunny garden at Malfitano there is a terrace opening out from the principal suite of reception rooms; carved marble seats tempt one to stay and view the avenue, reminding one of one of the stately vista of Versailles in miniature. Here, as one would expect from the expert writer on wild bird life and on prehistoric research at Motya, there is scientific precision, as well as studied beauty in the garden. Labels are attached to the rare aloes, the palms and agaves: much experimental growing is undertaken: accuracy of detail noted, and beneath the luxuriance of the scene even a tyro in the science of botany may feel the firm ground of knowledge.

Even in the modern private gardens of Sicily there is much more grouping and building than we find in our smaller gardens in England, which in their own style are unmatched for beauty. The pillared pergola we have imported from Italy, and its grace has made

it a permanent feature ; grouping of trees and foliage plants round well-head or stone seats is in its infancy, though long familiar at Chatsworth and such places where the style is frankly Italian.

Statuary we still use sparingly, but with what success those who have seen the clipped yew hedges of Grantley Hall, whose niches are filled with antique marble figures, and the lovely examples at Campsey Ash may best judge.

In the old days in England the Tudor gardens were not unlike the Sicilian gardens of to-day, except that brick was used instead of marble. There were towers or garden-houses adorning the outside walls, cisterns and fountains were everywhere. Natural springs were made use of, and vine pergolas, shady arbours and knot gardens, such as have just been made, or rather remade, at Hampton Court, where lavender, thyme, rosemary, and such herbs and simples were grown. A Paradise, or out-of-door sitting-room of noble proportion, built of stone or brick, often octagonal, such as still exists at the Duke of Sutherland's Sutton Place, near Woking, was in every nobleman's garden, and a lake with lovely reflections was to be found in the park or pleasure-gardens near to the fish-ponds.

Most of the beautiful old English gardens were swept of all these interesting features through the bad influence of "Capability" Brown and his school in the eighteenth century.

In Mrs. Robert Whitaker's garden at the Villa Sophia there is an Arab garden-house where the mosaic fountain of La Zisa is reproduced. Here the waters of the wall stream pour along a mosaic channel in the floor, just as they did in the days when King William the Bad made his pleasure-house.

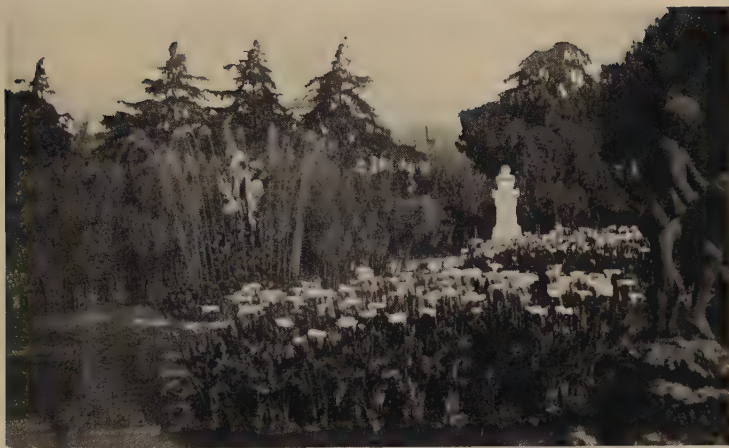
In all these privately owned gardens there are now tennis courts of perfect surface, discreetly placed where such necessary pleasure grounds do not show as an anachronism in the landscape.

That delightful adjunct to our English gardens, the kitchen garden, is never seen in Sicily, no flower-bordered rows of vegetables, no homely carrots, turnips, or red-stained beetroot foliage: there is trenching everywhere to conserve every drop of moisture for the plants, but not for potatoes and celery. The fruit garden is unknown, except for tree fruit such as apples, pears, nespole, peaches, but currant and gooseberry bushes, raspberry canes, and espalier apple and pear trees are never seen.

Vegetables are grown in market gardeners' allotments by farmers, who regularly bring their produce into the town in the light carretta cart, which will hold a mighty load when skilfully packed, and the produce is sold to shops or private individuals in a small town. One sees the octroi officials on the borders of every town, examining the load carefully, so that not even a lettuce shall come in untaxed.

A delightful incident by the animal fountain at Taormina sheds a light on the difference in price for goods offered to natives and to foreigners. I watched an old woman, having six fine globe artichokes, uncooked, in her hand, bargaining with the country salesman. After a long time she held up one penny in payment; the man protested, but took the coin and proceeded to give change!

The ubiquitous lemon groves which appear in so many of the great private gardens are not seen at the Villa Sperlinga, which has traces of English taste in its magnificently built and lavishly planted acres. There,



ARUM LILY AND PAPYRUS IN A WATER GARDEN WITH GROUPS OF STATUARY

Galiff Crupi



DATURA (*BRUGMANSLA KNIGHTI*) COMMON IN SICILIAN GARDENS, GROWING 15FT.
HIGH, PURE WHITE TRUMPET-SHAPED FLOWERS, HEAVY PERFUME

olives of Saracenic age still flourish ; their trunks are split and twisted until one would think no sap could rise ; they grow in an orchard space, leaning like a group of bent old men tortured with centuries of deformity, their foliage a mist of silver. Paths and steps of rare coloured marbles, placed in uneven shaped sections, give a note of gaiety in shady alleys.

Above a deep grotto, without even a path to disclose its whereabouts, is a hidden garden, where not only is there a riot of floral colour, but the enclosing walls glow with Persian tiles and those of Palermo and Caltagirone ; amphora and old oil jars hold salvia, geraniums and stocks.

In such a place one could imagine Olivia and her page would linger, or shall we see Malvolio " cross-gartered " and pompous ?

Shakespeare reminds one of the pathetic little chapel garden of to-day in which is the reputed tomb of Romeo and Juliet at Verona. Beneath the ground the world's great lovers are buried together : a mediæval stone sarcophagus marks the place. Americans throw their visiting-cards in this grim receptacle—surely the anti-climax of sentimentalism.

Of the freak gardens of the old court suburb of Bagheria, which has been called the Richmond of Palermo, one need say only a very few words.

At the end of the eighteenth century great ladies in Sicily played the same games as Marie Antoinette was indulging in, with her milkmaids, at the Petit Trianon at Versailles.

In some of the gardens of the nobles who built the suburban residences outside Palermo at this period there are pavilions where life-size waxworks are disposed ; in others, grotesque monsters, so

carefully described by Goethe. It is characteristic of the worthlessness and vulgarity of German taste that he should write of these imbecilities with a wealth of detail and devote no word to the restrained and perfect beauty of Monreale's superb buildings which we know he visited. A perusal of his "Travels in Sicily" makes one wonder.

Of a later owner of a garden at Bagheria, the Marchese Roccaforte, Mrs. Joseph Whitaker tells a charming story in her book, "Sicily and England":

The Marchese Roccaforte, a Palermetan and a friend of the Scaleas, had elected to settle in Paris. He had taken an active part in the Sicilian revolution, and had voted against the hereditary House of Peers in 1848, thus willingly giving up his own birthright. A true Liberal, but of a most modest and retiring nature, the Marchese settled at Neuilly, where so many of the Italian patriots found refuge, hospitality, and help. He lived there very quietly, giving himself up to the cultivation of roses, a taste he carried back with him to his native island in the Unity. He made a beautiful garden round his villa in the fertile plain of Bagheria near Palermo; but in his will he ordered it to be destroyed at his death as he did not wish his beloved roses to survive him.

Shade of the Dean of Rochester, how would such devotion to the Rose World have affected him? The highest authority on rose culture, as founder of modern garden literature, as traveller and scholar and lover in chief of roses, how would Dean Hole have spoken of this individual expression of love for roses?

Beside the gardens in Sicily, in the ordinary sense of the word, there are the small-flowered spaces which, unambitious in design, are yet so charmingly and

suitably cultivated that they must have their meed of admiration and description in this sketch-book chapter of Sicilian taste and artistic judgment in gardening.

Imagine, for instance, the sheet of white iris at the Palazzo S. Stefano, which we were lucky enough to see in perfection in Taormina. The open space is small, for other buildings have grown up round this beautiful fourteenth-century relic, belonging to the Duke of Spucches. There are adornments of black lava and white marble, with Arab battlements; there are heavily traceried windows of Sicilian Gothic in the upper story, and an imposing parapet. No rainbow colouring of purple bougainvilleas, orange, marigold, or crimson cineraria, was needed here, the pure white of the iris rivalling the marble, the imperial erect pose and sword-like leaves only were needed for perfection, and the natural instinct of the artistic southerner placed them there. The Arab battlements with marble white embellishment seem to be the solid manifestation of the white flower.

Another garden, small, homely, but perfect, belongs to the Benedictine monastery adjoining the Cloister of Monreale Cathedral. *In situ* they lead out of one another, and in story they must do the same. The cloister with its quaint Saracenic arches is nearly 200 feet square, and there are two hundred exquisite columns in perfect alignment, no two having the same capital; each tells some legend, depicts some incident in finest carved stone, which is of golden colour, rich and mellow like the sides, walls, and pavements.

On entering one seems to have stepped into a golden corridor, its sombre richness lit here and there with the burnished gold mosaic of mashrabayah work. The centre is planted soberly, a carpet of violets and pansies,

freesias, some palms to suit the Oriental splendour, and a rose or two, but in the glow of golden stone and mosaic such matters are secondary. In one corner is a gem Moorish fountain ; its richly inlaid column, rising from a stone basin, is surmounted with small lions' heads, from which the water flows. The simplicity of line in this fountain is lovely : it stands in a tiny colonnaded roofless court. A little doorway leads into the monks' dormitory and the Benedictine Monastery ; the church is roofless, the apse and walls still standing, and we pass through to the garden : it is bounded on one side by the church wall, in which is a range of Arabo-Norman windows. On the other side is a wall, breast high, with embrasures and marble seats, from whence one sees the Conca d'Oro in all its beauty and fertility, the flat-roofed buildings of Palermo, and the kneeling camel hill promontory, its forefeet in the blue water.

Beyond the gold shell valley filled with orange and lemon groves, with cactus hedges and pale grey bean fields, there are subtle and delicately outlined hills. Tossed undulations with barren limestone crests, whose complicated billows are lost in grey distance. How delicious to be roused from contemplation of this stupendous outlook by the homely perfume of violets : they grow in this Benedictine garden in masses 20 inches wide, as borders everywhere : sometimes the long-stalked purple variety, sometimes the double mauve of Parma : sometimes single or double, while each seems more fragrant than the last. The aconites and snowdrops, crocuses and hyacinth blooms have disappeared, but scarlet tulips stand in rows like Life Guards at the trooping of the colours on the King's birthday at Whitehall, and the double pinks, " Mrs. Simpkins," still showing green on the outside of their

cups, will make a fine show in a day or two. Behind a yard-high hedge of rosemary in full flower of pale grey there are anemones all "gleaming with purple and gold," scarlet, pure white, and white, purple-veined; pansies cluster at their feet. This convent garden has a fountain, of course, a great round stone basin with a cluster of arum lilies, white as the solitary snow-peak of the Madonia mountain on the other side of the valley, and the old gardener tells us these lilies bloom all through the year. His cottage is cosily placed at one end of his domain, and a dark-eyed youngster stops his pea-shelling to see the *forestieri* pass.

Presently the gardener reappears with great bunches of freesias and two mandarini picked from the trees near a sheltering wall.

This habit of flower-giving is a delightful feature of Sicilian life. Nature provides flowers in such profusion that they enter largely into the happenings of everyday life.

Every class has this lovely habit. If one is invited to tea with a friend the butler hands one a great bouquet on leaving in just as conventional a manner as he hands one's sunshade in the hall.

After wandering round the lovely room, where Princess Tasca showed treasures of historic and artistic beauty, I found a great bouquet on my chair. Children in the mountain villages throw bunches of wild orchids, anemones, wild lupins, or marigolds into the car as one drives past; doubtless they hope to induce the throwing back of soldi, but the unrehearsed carnival atmosphere of flower-throwing is delightful to the *forestieri*.

One of the loveliest small gardens I saw was that of Mr. Wood, the gifted American artist, at Taormina, who has made an ideal home in an old convent building.

A peach tree in blossom stood erect in one corner of the colonnaded cloister ; its fragrant branches reached the terrace above, and as one looked down a pool of sapphire blue cinerarias was planted near it, nothing more. On the terrace was a great stone basin full of yellow ranunculus, their edges dipped in carmine like a picotee of the old "sops in wine" variety : the flowers were pressed almost as closely together as if they were cut and made into a posy. So they grew, a packed mass of sunshine.

Close to the Porta di Castro at Palermo is the little garden of the S. Giovanni degli Eremiti, which is the setting for the rose-domed church founded by Gregory the Great on one of the estates inherited from his Sicilian mother, Silvia. The dismantled church is one of the earliest Norman buildings and is almost entirely Oriental in aspect, with its large red dome and four small ones. A wild garden, planted with palms, great bush cinerarias, water plants by an old fountain, cactus and violet beds, leads by up and down paths to the cloisters, where cluster roses, tall lilies, and orange-veined abutilons make a lovely informal garden.

Perhaps the most oddly situated of any gardens in the world are in those wonderful Latomie that one sees at Syracuse. Cicero describes them as "the work of old Kings and tyrants. The whole of it is cut out of rock excavated to a marvellous depth and carved out by the labour of great multitudes of men."

The garden of the Cappuccini Latomia in the Achradina quarter is very lovely. Ivy clothes the walls of sheer white limestone, lentisk and vermouth, rose, geranium plants, and cactus grow on ledges. In the depths are almond trees, olives of immense age, lemons, and pomegranates, and as one walks about gazing at

tombs of nobles of the Roman period, early Christian cave dwellings, and burial-places, one comes across a perfect avenue of palms, beneath them ordered rows of carnations, another wild part, then two great beds with rosemary hedges contain mauve and purple iris, and gardeners are busy trenching the soil further on for peonies whose bloom is not yet in perfection. This Latomia, more fully described in Chapter IV, is part of the garden of the Villa Politi.

Sicilian men seem to handle flowers much more as a matter of course than do our menfolk. One sees them in the towns carrying great bunches of wild and garden flowers, all mixed together, every shape and colour and size tied up in a mass.

A curious incident occurred with regard to a man's flower mania which could hardly have happened in England. When leaving a hotel we nearly missed our train, because the station bus conductor was arranging fresh flowers in the little vase placed inside.

In English cars *de luxe* there are flowers, but I have never seen them in a station bus, nor can I imagine an Englishman piling luggage on the roof and then culling freezia and marigolds for decoration inside.

SOME WILD FLOWERS

There are no "meadows trim with daisies pied" in Sicily: the growth is too luxuriant; it is not coarse or overloaded with green, for Sicily's air is not humid, but the flowered fields are full of tall iris and lupins, long-stalked anemones, asphodels, and such plants which are graceful, wild, and lovely, but never "trim."

The Island has flowers in the hedges all the year round, from the mauve crocus of the winter month,

which pushes up on the hill sides in November, asphodel, with its brown-veined pink blooms and great bunch of sword leaves, wild asparagus, yellow as a buttercup, bitter almond, with its second cousin the cherry laurel, whose growth was improved by Lucullus the Roman, orange abutilon bells, with the strawberry tree, arbutus, an evergreen with wax-like flowers and berry fruit which Pliny named *Unedo*: "One I eat," and I have never seen anyone try a second, except the birds, who revel in them.

The white gummy cistus, and wood sorrel, which pulls its own blankets over its head at night to protect itself from cold, but by day spreads a flood of yellow with its clover-like leaf in every lemon grove and roadside: all these and many other flowers are blooming in January.

Then come the fields of narcissi, not hundred-headed as in the days of Proserpine, but starring the fields with sheets of white, eight-headed blooms that nod in the wind as though they remembered old times in their youth in Greece, a lovely boy before they got their flower form. All the members of the orchid family seem to visit Sicily together, red-mauve flowers with stalks 10 inches long: orange, with spotted leaves, a lovely yellow with shorter head but larger flowers, an orange red, and one whose colour is almost black. Lindley says, "There is scarcely a common reptile or insect to which some of them have not been likened." They are hooded, spurred and unspurred, pouched; they have pollen which is powdery, loosely coherent, or granular; drooping, erect or spiral, they are anyway lovely, and what charming pet names we have for them in England—Bird's-nest Orchids, Lady's Summer Tresses and Autumn Tresses, and

never a shingled one amongst them ! They make the meadows a very joy to walk in during the second month of the year.

The lesser asphodel also comes in February : its flowers dwarf size, and though some hold that had it not been for Homer, and for its lovely name, this flower would not have received so much admiration, yet the beauty of the sword-like leaves and feathery plume is undeniable.

Adonis flower floods the country with patches, red as the blood of the beautiful youth who, according to Greek legend, was killed by the wild boar, and his blood stained the flowers near. The leaves are feathery as fennel ; the scarlet petals, black at their base, make it "pheasant eye" for alternative name. The glory of anemones, scarlet, mauve, white, veined with purple, magenta and yellow, is seen to perfection in Sicily, especially near Syracuse ; named from the Greek, *anemos*, the wind, they seem to flourish best in exposed places. I never saw our white, pink-tinted wood anemone of English woods ; perhaps it does not grow in Sicily ; there were, however, scarlet stellas with vigorous 10-inch stalks, looking like poppies in the grass.

Stars of Bethlehem, the common star and the drooping, spangle the roadsides, and wild hyacinth, another youth of Greece, this time changed into a flower by Apollo : both of the lily family, no wonder that Europa and her maidens went "gathering lilies on the leas." Then it was that the daughter of Phoenix saw the Bull and so went off to Crete.

Another hedge grower is the violet, ever so perfumed and wild, with stalks 7 inches long. and woodruff, used in the old days to curdle milk like

rennet. Another member of this family (of which there are 2,000) gives a red dye, *Madder rubia tinctoria*, and strangely imparts a red colour to the bones of animals that feed on it. Mauve woodruff grows tall in Sicily in March, topping by 6 inches Jack in the Pulpit with his striped flowers and speckled stalk.

White campion nods in the hedgerows, while the bladder campion lives chiefly on the stony heights, and great dandelions, twice as large as our golden beauties, turn into bunches of seed, each fitted with his parachute, its extra size seeming just right for the children to find "what's o'clock" where 14, 22, and 24 o'clock make the round of the dial complete.

Daisies are small and white, or large and pink-tipped as with us, and in April comes the marguerite of our hayfields and the yellow daisies with flowers $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across. How lovely they are when they grow near blue flax flowers, grown in small patches in the Etna districts, where cottage weaving still goes on! Wild flax is shy, but to be found near Randazzo, and wild borage, whose splendid sapphire blue flower is the size of a crown piece, blooms profusely all over the Island.

Another giant is the scabious or lady's pincushion, with the pollen-laden pins sticking out above the waving fringe of white, mauve, or red petals. Its unlovely name was given it because it was supposed to be a cure for leprosy. The Devil bit away a part of the root because he was jealous of the good the herb might do to man, so that one late variety is still called Devil's-bit.

The wild lupin is seen to perfection in May on the heights leading to Castileone, sometimes 3 or 4 feet high. Sicilians grow lupins as a crop and feed their cattle on it; the seed is edible. Lovers of



"MEADOWS OF ASPHODEL" AT SEGESTA

blue flowers would find plenty of wild periwinkle, both giant and dwarf, and the blue pimpernel with habit like our red variety, but large in size.

The pink-flowering rush is also an early May flower, at its best before the streams become a few trickling drops or dry up altogether ; with it is seen the red champion, ragged robin, and sow thistle, often 6 feet high.

Amongst the stones grows the yellow-horned *glau-cium luteum* poppy, with horns 6 inches long, by June ; while dock *Rumex*, a giant also in size, needing scant soil, blooms with pink or yellow flowers. Stonecrops make Sicily's stony ways ablaze with gold ; dwarf champion covers any ground beneath the olive and lemon trees with its pink carpet, but the culture of the crops is so intensive that incessant trenching gives wild flowers little chance in the fruit groves.

In June comes summer snowflake of the *Amaryllis* family, and wild smilax, with its tiny green florets and fine red berries, twines itself round any bare stalk or tree-trunk.

The long-stalked wild gladioli are pinkish-red, and their sword-like leaves thrust up on shady banks, and sometimes a blue iris is their neighbour, or a wild peony, named after the legendary physician Pæon, who cured the wounds of the gods in the Trojan war.

Yellow iris is near the water's edge, but larger varieties with red-brown petals and canary colour with mauve and purple we found in our picnic meadow near Randazzo, where centuries ago had been a lava bed ; here also was cow parsley as tall as a great shrub, and agrimony's yellow flower red-centred. The brambles were there, but no bloom comes till June, and briony's tangled garlands, the last of the red

purple, bugloss and cornflowers in perfection, with chicory's lighter blue as neighbour.

On the lava flow nearer Lingua Glossa village, yellow broom was beginning to grow, the seed doubtless having been brought on feet of birds and lodged in a hole where dust had collected; this plant and the sunspurge, or Euphorbia, are the first to grow on the deadly lava soil a century after an eruption has taken place. The spurge is more brilliant in colour than that in England, the flowers are brown, orange, and golden yellow.

A yellow cow parsley, *Ferula*, comes in July, when the sweet-smelling genista is in perfection, and a red gentian.

The tiny red flower with a big name, *Mesembryanthemum*, also grows with vetches of every kind, meadow-sweet and purple loosestrife and honeysuckle in bunches, and also the variety which has single flowers at intervals on the stems, and the deadly nightshade climber. There was woody nightshade too, earlier in the year, with orange berries, and a purple clematis in the hedges.

In August and September the wild onion flowers and pink oleander the size of a penny are found. October, in Sicily, brings Scillas, which flower in England's spring, and thistle flowers 3 inches across on stems 3 feet high. There is also a yellow thistle with a lovely white-veined leaf, sometimes 15 inches long, which, like all elaborate foliage plants, has an insignificant bloom. Wild tomatoes have a mauve flower and a yellow fruit. Tansy flowering late in the year is yellow, that colour of joy; this plant flowers anywhere.

Amongst other flowers, chiefly red, are late-flowering

valerian, growing to a huge size. Of the wild plants growing in special places we remember best the wild acanthus at Girgenti bordering the marble road, deep-rutted with the Greek and Roman chariot wheels which took the worshippers to the Golden Temples in the plain; one could not wonder that the handsome leaf inspired the capitals of Corinthian columns.

There were snapdragons a pale flesh colour to rose growing on some of the ruined columns—Boccadi Lione the Sicilians call them—candytuft in crevices. Alyssum grew in great bulging cushions, a mass of white and yellow, and the grey flower of rosemary was on every hedge of this delightful herb. Rosemary borders and hedges grow in every country lane, and are used persistently in garden planning.

The wild yellow cineraria bushes are in profusion at Selinunte, but are also seen elsewhere. We only saw the true wild palmetta near Segesta, growing high up the limestone crags, and near Syracuse: it is the dwarf variety which was used by the ancient Greeks as an emblem of victory. In most of their games the crown was of palm, after Theseus returning from Crete celebrated games in Delos, in honour of Apollo, and crowned the victors with palm, as the emblem of triumph and victory; the early Christians used it as a sign of martyrdom.

Victors at the Isthmian and Nemean games were crowned with wild parsley, and some say Selinunte takes its name from the Selinon, but whether this plant is parsley or wild celery authorities cannot agree: a sprig of it appears on the coins of the city four centuries before Christ.

Fennel is one of the loveliest wild flowers of Sicily, with its great feathery leaves and golden flower

rod, 3 or 4 feet high. We saw it in the hedges, in fields, by the roadside. The vegetable or garden fennel (*Finocchio*) is one of the favourite foods of the Sicilians, having a strong aniseed taste ; it is eaten with cheese, raw like celery, or stewed. We were not successful in acquiring a taste for its pungent flavour, which after March becomes more pronounced. So abundant is this food that there are two Sicilian proverbs which indicate that it is of little value : “ I will have my share even to a bit of fennel,” and “ I am no more valued than fennel.”

Sage springs from the old walls, ground ivy also loves dry places, and we found catmint near the sea, so useful for eye lotions we were told—at any rate, its purple-blue flowers were “ a sight for sore eyes ” ; delicious smelling balm, named after the Greek word for bee, which seeks its honey, and aromatic wild basil. Wild thyme in plenty, recalling the old riddle of our grandmothers, before crossword puzzles came into fashion :

I'm a little plant that's scented,
Since the world began I've been ;
When I'm gone I'm oft lamented,
But when here I'm oft called mean—
And that is Time.

Marigolds were growing everywhere, in low ground and high up near Segesta, blazing patches above Giardini and all about Rometta. The convolvulus, giant white, is fairly common ; there is plenty of the small almond-scented pink, but the lovely blue I only saw on the railway near Catania.

Sometimes the country outlook is curiously colourless, although so fertile. Olives are whitish-grey in

some lights—"the silver smoke of olives"; the cactus grey, with old stems of fawn grey; the acanthus-like artichoke a glaucous green; then there are fields of fave, the grey-green of half-ripe oats, and the ghostly green of swaying bamboos—a landscape in grisaille.

When the almond blossom is in perfection the country is a sheet of pink-white snow, the sun blazes on it and lights up the old temples as with a torch of gold. Scarcely less lovely is the first vivid green of the tender young almond leaves, when the flowers fall. A visit to Sicily, to her mountains, hill-towns, villages, and meadows, reveals loveliness enough to satisfy even those who expect from the island every form of beauty.

CHAPTER XII

PALADINS AND FAIR LADIES

THE puppet show in Sicily to-day is as popular as it was in Greece and Rome, where marionette theatres flourished before Christ and special laws regulated the performances.

The name of a manager of an early marionette show has survived : one Pothin it was who catered for the theatrical tastes of the Athenians, as interpreted by the animated puppets, and in any of the great European galleries one may see articulated figures of ivory, wood, or baked clay showing holes for the strings manipulated by the showman.

Moving statuary for the purposes of priestcraft, when clockwork, counterbalance, or expansion of metals was used, was probably the origin of moving figures, and Herodotus writes of a fête of Osiris, when mechanical means were used to imitate natural movement. Greek oracles were made to impress worshippers by movements of hands, arm, and head, and at Pompeii one sees a statue with a tube in the mouth from which the words of the priest were heard.

During the Middle Ages and before, when Sicilians could neither read nor write, miracle plays showed episodes in Bible history, as did the mosaics in Monreale and Cefalù. There was sacred story in glass windows, in carved wood and stone. Pictorial teaching was a

necessary phase, and heraldry had its real use in showing, by pictures, the name and lineage of a man, when few could read the written word.

It is a pity that now more use is not made of cinema shows in teaching by pictures, instead of allowing foolish, trashy stories and unwholesome American films to appear.

There are not lacking the few who say that puppet realism tends to foster the violence which is too often the result of a quarrel in Sicily, and to point out that the men and boys who see, night after night, bloodshed represented with a romantic glamour, are the more likely to emulate the habits of the chivalrous, but violent heroes, than to acquire the peaceful behaviour which is more suited to the twentieth century.

The Théâtre des Paladins flourishes in Sicily now as do the miracle plays of the Middle Ages, where Judas Iscariot was a Buffoon and Pontius Pilate an ancestor of Harlequin. At Cefalù we saw the stage which was being prepared for the Easter miracle play in the crypt of the Cathedral, and at Adorna one is still acted in the courtyard of the Castle each year on Easter Monday.

Crude realism persists, and in the stories of romance and chivalry on the marionette stage, bravery and cowardice, vice and virtue are painted in unmistakable colours; beauty and ugliness are emphasized with all possible force; bloodshed, gallantry, tomfoolery, and profound grief are all used unsparingly to heighten the effect of the narrative.

There are certain conventional gestures which are perfectly understood by the audience. For instance, if the puppet place his feet against his forehead he

is thinking ; if the back of his hand is against his head he is weeping, and this same gesture painted on a Greek vase 400 years B.C. is the attitude of lamentation, so that the puppet's dumb show dates from remote antiquity : if listening to conversation the marionette stands firmly, but if speaking he raises his arms or hands and swings one leg.

An angry and passionate man always had red eyeballs, so that if such a one comes on the stage a quarrel may be expected. The most important figure is generally a few inches taller than anyone else, as in pictures of the Byzantine period.

Occasionally stories of the Old Testament heroes, such as Samson or Noah, are given, but even then Paladins and their ladies are introduced. It is the Paladin stories which are of chief importance in Sicily, legends of the peers of Charlemagne, of whom Roland is the most important. The episode which ends with his death at Roncesvalles lasts for six months. The doings of the sons of the Paladins are told in episodes which last only about three months ; there are other warlike affairs, of a more nondescript character, but the fighting is always against the Saracens.

At Christmas the story of the Nativity is given, at Easter the Passion, at midsummer S. John the Baptist ; some of the theatres give a play showing episodes in the life of Garibaldi to celebrate his landing at Marsala on May 11, 1860.

As a rule a story is broken off each evening at a most thrilling point : the audience is thus induced to return next day with the necessary coin to hear how the narrative is disentangled, just as our serial stories are arranged to leave the reader longing for more.

There is a kind of unwritten law that there must be at least one battle each evening, or at any rate one mortal combat in each episode : the love interest must also be always to the fore, though naturally it cannot be conclusive at every performance.

A Paladin is, properly speaking, an officer connected with the Palace, and in the Frankish saga applied to about forty men of noble birth—peers who attended the court of Charlemagne; twelve of these were in attendance as bodyguard to the king. The word is now used in a general sense for any hero or knight-errant.

The Charlemagne Paladins whose exploits furnish nearly every scene in the Paladin plays of Sicily had extraordinary adventures: fought their adversaries (generally heathen) with incredible bravery; achieved miraculous deeds with the aid of Madonna, angels, birds and beasts; rescued fair ladies from Saracens, wild beast, and cruel relatives, and not infrequently died heroic and most uncomfortable deaths: for the episodes in the Charlemagne saga by no means provide happy endings.

Their personal property often had special names, histories, and, I had almost said, personalities, as did those of the Arthurian heroes of the Round Table, such as the sword Excalibur.

The Paladin Roland had a wonderful horn named Olivant, which he had won from the giant Jalmundus. When Roland was set upon by the Gascons at Roncesvalles he sounded it to give Charlemagne warning of danger. At the third blast it cracked in two, but the noise was so great that the birds fell dead, and the whole Saracen army was panic-stricken: a great scene.

Roland's sword was also won from the giant ; it was called Durandal, and had once belonged to Hector. In the hilt was a thread from the Madonna's cloak, a tooth from S. Peter, one of the hairs of S. Denis, and a drop of S. Basil's blood.

To prevent Durandal from falling into the hands of the infidel, Roland strove to break it, after he had received his death-wound ; but it was unbreakable, on account of the oddments in the hilt, and he hurled it into a poisoned stream. An alternative death-scene, used at some theatres, shows the hero fixing his sword in the rock and falling upon it, when he sees himself surrounded by the ambushade : then an imposing miracle occurs. Streams of purest water gush from the rock and Roland is crowned with a golden halo, which descends from the sky as he dies, amid the tears and frantic applause of the audience.

The final episode of a story with the death of a popular Paladin is seldom played to a full house. The emotional Sicilian is not fond of seeing the overcoming by death of his favourite, and no showman is depressed when he sees empty seats on this night, for he knows that his patrons stay away not from coldness but from excess of zeal.

Roland is certainly the most famous of the Paladins, and was called the Christian Theseus and the Achilles of the West. He was Count of Mans, son of the Duke Milo of Aiglant ; his mother, Bertha, was Charlemagne's sister. Roland " was eight feet high and of an open countenance ; he invited confidence and inspired respect." He was reputed to be brave, loyal, and single-minded : he converted the giant Morgante to Christianity. His exploits with Oliver, another of Charlemagne's Paladins, have given rise to the ex-



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THEATRE OF THE PALADINS OF CHARLEMAGNE, STAGE
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pression, "A Roland for an Oliver," or "blow for blow," "tit for tat."

What Roland did Oliver was sure to do, so that old chroniclers seem to find it hard to separate their achievements. Oliver was son of Raimor of Genoa, nephew of Viana and brother of Alda. Though he was Roland's rival at first, they afterwards became inseparable companions, and the cementing of their friendship is told in the Charlemagne cycle of the poem of Gerard of Viana.

The history of Ogier the Dane is written as a sub-cycle of the Charlemagne saga. He was originally a Norse rover, but coming to Charlemagne's court became one of his peers.

Ogier loves the daughter of the King of England, whom he, of course, rescues from Saracens. A great battle with Pagans follows, when the Franks are completely successful and he marries his princess.

In the British Museum there is a MS. of mid-fourteenth century date which tells of this hero's adventures in the Land of Faerie, when he meets Morgan la Fay, but with this episode we are not concerned.

These stories of the battles, rescuings, murders, and love episodes of the Paladins are not the exclusive possession of the marionette theatres. They are also the entire stock-in-trade of the Sicilian street storytellers.

The valour of Rinaldo, the enchantments of Malagigi and a dozen others, are reeled off with appropriate dramatic action, while comic dwarfs, and such minor characters, are occasionally introduced to provide relief. Stamping, shouting, waving his arms and legs, mimicking a swoon or the effects of a death-wound, the

street story-teller does not shrink from describing a whole battle scene, with appropriate action, and he will take the part alternately of the slayer and the slain, or even a projectile thrown at a combatant, or his prancing charger, whose name is probably known to the listeners.

Often these stories are told in the native poems of Sicily, expressed in octaves in Sicilian dialect, which are handed down from father to son.

It is such stories as these which are illustrated on the *carretta* panels, and the boy who drives the donkey cart in with market vegetables sees his favourite scene on the cart sides which he has probably witnessed at the marionette theatre the night before, and the beauteous lady who was rescued by the brave knight is depicted on the side panel with floating veil and golden diadem.

Sixty years ago one Don Giusto Lodico of Palermo wrote 3,900 pages of the "History of the Paladins," giving their noble speeches, their prodigious soliloquies, the hopes and fears and frantic situations of the "fayre ladys," the ferocities and misdeeds of the Saracens (always represented as black men), in fact, the full history of the battles fought against infidels or for love of "fayre ladys."

Such was the success of this exciting work, which came out in parts, that the office of the publisher, Gaudio of Palermo, was invaded by crowds of people fighting for copies of the numbers as fiercely as ever Paladin fought for the sake of chivalry. The fortnightly parts were at last complete, but this remarkable "best seller" is now very scarce, as the thousands all over Sicily are so cherished by the owners that they are never willing to part with them.

As a rule a Sicilian puppet theatre is run by a family. The father or eldest son will be the proprietor; other brothers will help to move the strings and rods, which is heavy work, when many puppets are on the stage: sisters or a mother will clean, repair, sew fresh dresses or speak for the women's parts. In some theatres there are several hundreds of characters, for many of the Paladins require two bodies, and puppets are kept which can be cut in halves, either across or downwards, as in the bedroom scene described. Occasionally performances are given which resemble a music-hall entertainment: for this, very complicated dancers are required, who can be made to dance and to walk on a tight-rope and alight on the tips of their toes like a ballet-dancer, besides raising the arms and posturing in various ways; many strings are required, and such a puppet may cost six or seven pounds.

Again a comic man is very expensive; his expression and clothes must be grotesque, and he must be able to drink or even smoke a pipe—real smoke must issue from his mouth. He also will be required to dance. Such a comic man is often used with the Paladins, as a faithful servant or knowing groom, who will bring a horse at the right moment after his master has escaped from prison, and do other useful jobs of a like nature.

Such a character as *Le nigre en vingt morceaux* is a very expensive trick puppet, which provides a whole entertainment by himself lasting fifteen minutes and is quite exceptional.

So vital is the interest in these shows that a visit to one of the six theatres of the Paladins at Palermo was clearly indicated, for it is not in many places besides Sicily that one can study the emotional level of an audience primed in childhood with tales of chivalry

and adventure, to whom a mystery play may have been a commonplace—for where else do the priests still teach biblical facts and doctrines to the people in this form?

One of the headquarters of the *Pupe di Ballaro* lie in the quarter of Palermo close to the Harbour.

Down the *Via Collegio* we went, past the usual houses of one room, their smoking interiors lighted only from the doorway or by one sickly oil lamp on short dip in its coarse earthen stand. A Teniers interior showed great wine casks against the wall and a wooden bench where half a dozen men sat with small mugs beside them, talking in the loud and cheerful tones which are characteristic of the Sicilian.

Further on, the usual great stable door of an ordinary lower part of a house or *basso* was set open, a dingy oil lamp swung from the roof: this was the entrance to the theatre; there was no light beyond. Two men in shirt-sleeves talked together, and a box office consisted of a wooden bench where entrance money was taken. A woman who had once been comely pushed back the straggling hair from her thin oval face, and a faded smile flickered anxiously when she saw we wished to enter. A single electric light was switched on in the cavern at the back, and we entered the *Marionette Theatre of the Via Collegio*. It was a large room about 25 feet long by 20 feet; some substantial-looking pews stood out from the side walls, these were reached by six rickety stairs; galleries ran down two sides; rows of boards provided the *fauteuils* in the stalls. The panels of the galleries were painted with what had once been gorgeous battle-scenes, pictures of Paladins engaged in mortal combat, the dramatic rescue of beauteous damsels by stalwart knights, and

the solemn crowning of kings arrayed in royal robes, seated on thrones, their consorts by their sides.

Although the lamp smoke and grime of many years had dimmed these scenes considerably, we were still able to beguile the tedium of a rather long wait by trying to identify Orlando, who should have had particularly bright armour and waving plumes, more wavy than anybody else's, and Charlemagne, more easy to recognise on account of his crown, also Rinaldo with his lion shield.

After some time a very lean boy of about sixteen entered, and placing a bag of tools in a small cupboard under the six stairs leading to the gallery, drew from a shelf a neat brass tray, six glasses of enormous size, and an earthen jug, besides a carafe with a queer brass stopper with a tube sticking out of it. He vanished with the jug, returning with it filled with water, slung over his head a small sack with strap, which contained dried pumpkin seeds, and the refreshment department was fully equipped.

The audience now began to straggle in, not infrequent scimmages at the door indicating reluctance to accede to the terms demanded by the box-office. What these terms were we never found out, but were told afterwards that prices ranged from one penny to one lira, which is twopence halfpenny; the price demanded of the foreigners was ten lire each.

Trade became brisk with the refreshment department, who walked up and down the centre aisle filling the big glasses with water, and then shaking from the tube-stoppered bottle two or three drops of colourless fluid, which turned the water cloudy. I believe it was essence of aniseed; the dried seeds were in great demand, and a **very** small handful was given for the

smallest coin which is made by the Italian mint, value about one cent. The cheerful sounds of cracking and expectoration of the husks were as yet the only entertainment which we had got for our ten lire ; it is for this reason that it is wise, if seated in the stalls, to take those places not within shot of the gallery. The audience beginning to show signs of impatience, one of the men in shirt-sleeves left the door, and walking up the centre aisle disappeared into what would have been the stage-box, if there had been one. In a moment a flood of light came from the two footlights below the stage, and we all applauded loudly ; another long wait, and further signs of impatience, which were rewarded this time by the commencement of the overture. The noise was unbelievable ; if you can imagine a tremendously loud piano-organ which has lost more than half its hammers or its teeth, or whatever the contrivance is which makes the notes, it will give you an idea of what we endured. The little curtained stage occupied only one-third of the end wall in the centre ; the diabolical music came from the left section, and as I sat stunned and trying to believe it was real, I wondered what might befall us from the other side of the stage. I was soon to know ; a din of drums and clash of cymbals answered the question, and sometimes alone and sometimes together these really fiendish noises continued. The audience sat entranced, little boys forgot to crack their seeds, fathers nodded in unison when a shred of tune emerged from the din and supplied the hiatus when the organ's teeth were missing. A baby slept in its father's arms. The Oriental taint is still so strong amongst the lower classes that women seldom leave their houses ; there were no women in the place except the woman show-keeper at the door. At

last the noise stopped, and now we thought the show would begin. Not at all; when we grew too impatient the drop-scene was agitated by an unseen hand or a curtain twitched, with the obvious endeavour to amuse us and keep us quiet, and it was not for fifteen minutes by the clock that the glorious moment arrived and the curtain went up.

Then was breathless silence while a noble knight came on in glittering armour and with a shining sword, which was worked by a side rod, as well as a ceiling wire; the puppet was about 26 inches high and spoke through the voice of the showman, describing his desire to kill the enemies of his seigneur, and one's memory floated back to tales of the Greek theatres 2,500 years ago, when a man at the side declaimed while the actors were on the stage.

The action continued, noble sentiments were proclaimed, other knights came on, and the audience held their breath with admiration; swords were unsheathed by the puppets when they were insulted by their enemies, visors were lowered, and duels were fought with surprising skill; each mighty combat was prolonged to the point of agony, and my neighbour on the board lounge fairly sobbed at the wounding of a hero. A storm of applause succeeded the lowering of the curtain on this tense scene, not a smile appeared, tragedy was in the air, even the pumpkin-seed fusillade ceased.

So familiar are the words to the audience, for the grandiose lines have probably been heard dozens of times, have been repeated by parents and grandparents, and have been heard from the professional story-tellers in the streets, that if the voice behind the proscenium pauses unduly the audience prompts.

Various contrivances are used to reinforce emotional scenes : when a hero dies, small white clouds, prosaically like bits of cotton-wool, ascend from the side of the dead man and represent his soul, which ascends to heaven. Goodness is always synonymous with beauty, ugliness with sin. An angel descending to comfort the last moments of a damsel in distress is always a woman, beautifully dressed, though her carved features may be somewhat hard. She will float about in diaphanous skirts, be crowned with flowers, and have a gorgeous ribbon sash. The devil, on the other hand, will try to prevent the baptism of an infidel, or perform other wicked deeds, necessary for the plot ; will be terrible in his ugliness, black, horned like a goat, with a monkey's tail and fierce daubs of red paint round his mouth and jaws. He growls and seldom walks upright, often on hands and knees—a perfect symbol of the power of Evil to turn men into beasts.

Real flames represent hell in a very clever manner, and stones are flung down from above, while victims writhe on the stage—all this will seem quite natural in the minds of these near dwellers to Etna, whose eruptions they will constantly have heard of, and probably witnessed.

In one play a spout of water miraculously appears when a bleeding or repentant Mohammedan has to be christened hastily before he dies ; drops are caught and the solemn rite performed in the nick of time, and the cloud soul represented by cotton-wool floats skywards while the audience sits spellbound.

At one of the charming performances by the puppets organized from time to time by the Associazione Siciliano Movimento Forestieri, in the clean and

spacious Cinema Theatre at Palermo, an excellent show was given by the managers of the Théâtre des Paladins.

The whole 12-feet theatre, stage, drop-scene and all complete, had been erected, the paladins played their story, conquered enemies, baptized heathens, embraced fair ladies, fought and died to perfection, while the voice of the showman declaimed, in bass or treble, the words of the play.

But the mentality of the audience was all wrong, so that the charm and atmosphere of the Little Theatre was no longer there.

These mail-clad warriors, to the smart and educated onlookers, were cleverly manipulated dolls, they were not Orlando or Rinaldo his very self. When the head of an enemy was cut right off in a duel and rolled along the stage we did not gravely applaud or sob, we laughed ; when the hero put on mediæval pyjamas and went to bed, and was presently murdered, falling out of bed in two neat pieces, nobody groaned. I longed to be back in the Via Collegio, surrounded by those men and boys who were profoundly moved by the scenes enacted, to whom characters on the stage had been known all their lives, the tales of chivalry and prowess the first stories told them by their mothers, the subject of familiar ballads and archaic verse. The stories of the Little Theatre remain one of the many strands in the loom of Sicilian character, whose woof and warp hold earlier and later threads of multi-coloured influence.

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